

***Mind Magic &
Mentalism***

FOR

DUMMIES®

Mind Magic & Mentalism FOR **DUMMIES®**

by James L. Clark



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About the Author

With over two decades of experience in the conjuring arts, **James L. Clark** has lectured about and performed mentalism for private audiences, at corporate events, in the theatre and on television in more than 30 countries. James' mentor Martin Gardner, the founder of the modern skeptical movement said that "James is a superb performer and entertainer... I'd rate him on level with American mentalists Kreskin and Max Maven, and in England, Derren Brown." Because of his relationship with Gardner, James has developed a particularly strong interest in debunking claims of the paranormal – especially those made by fraudulent psychics and mediums. It was Gardner who strongly encouraged James to write *Mind Magic & Mentalism For Dummies*. A paradoxical and complex character – James personifies the essence of what it means to be a modern polymath. He's a man of letters, an entrepreneur, a prolific author, consultant and a speaker. James attended law school, holds a Masters of Business Administration and is the only American to earn a Masters of Science degree in Global Security from the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, at the Royal Military College of Science, through Cranfield University – where he studied under renowned military historian Brigadier Richard Holmes, CBE. James is also a decorated humanitarian. A former Army medic, he served in both combat arms and special operations before turning his efforts towards providing in-field emergency and primary medical care as a volunteer in current conflict theaters, former military operational zones, areas of extreme poverty and famine, or that have been affected by natural or man-made disasters – earning him a Hero Award and international recognition for his actions. After Hurricane Katrina decimated the American Gulf Coast, James deployed to New Orleans to help survivors. When the earthquake leveled Haiti in 2010, James beat the US Marines to Port-au-Prince where he treated hundreds of patients in the streets. After the devastating tsunami struck the North-Eastern coast of Japan in 2011, James was one of the first Westerners to arrive in Fukushima as the reactors began to melt down at the Daiichi nuclear plant. James strongly believes the real magic in life is making a difference in the world around us, and he's dedicating a portion of the proceeds of this book to those charitable pursuits.

His website is <http://www.jameslclark.com>.

Dedications

To Martin Gardner – without his encouragement and direction, I'd never have written this book. I couldn't have asked for a better person to mentor me – I miss him dearly. To Prof. Richard Holmes – a remarkable man that I had the distinct honor and privilege to spend quality time with whilst studying at the Royal Military College of Science. As a military officer, he showed me how to serve. As a family man, he showed me how to love. As an academic, he showed me how to learn and teach. As an author and television presenter – he showed me how to share in creative ways. Rest in peace my friend. To Dave Mills – I am the man I am and the man I am becoming because of who you are. I love you. To Troy – thank you for sharpening me. And to Harold, Callum, Kuljit, Darrell, Stathi, Dean, Sam and De'vo – you're the rarest kinds of friends a man can have – real ones. To my son Jamie – before I was a father, I had no idea what real love was. I see so much of me in you, and so much of you in me. I'm proud of who you are and who you're becoming. Seeing you grow up has been the greatest joy in my life. To Cherie – it's rare that I don't know what to say or how to say it, but in this case I just don't have the words to articulate how much you mean to me. Even "I love you" seems so woefully inadequate to express what I feel for you. To my brother in arms SGT Nathan J. Vacho (US Army), KIA in Iraq. And to all of those who have lost their lives in the fight for freedom and liberty around the world.

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Introduction



For most of my life I protected the inner workings, activities, methods and techniques of magic and mentalism. I felt compelled and honour-bound to fulfil this duty and believed that secrecy was necessary to ensure the survival of mentalism as an art. As I progressed from puzzles to tricks and on to more advanced and elaborate illusions, my peers, colleagues and mentors reinforced this philosophy of concealment.

In *Mind Magic & Mentalism For Dummies*, I throw caution to the wind, pull back the curtain and dare to defy the mentalist coven and laws. I risk being ostracised and becoming an outcast from the community I've served, simply by giving away the knowledge that's been guarded for generations.

Nah, I'm just being melodramatic! Although pockets of mentalists may think along those lines, most aren't so narcissistic as to think that this book is going to be the downfall of mentalism. Instead, most performers see this book for what it really is: a well-constructed primer that they wish they'd had when starting out.

Mind Magic & Mentalism For Dummies represents a milestone in my life and something I desperately wanted when I first began practising mentalism: an honest-to-goodness, no-holds barred instructional resource on the art that shows me the things I want to learn. It didn't exist then, but I'm proud to say it does now.

I can't guarantee that you'll be received with open arms by everyone in the magic world now that you've decided to delve into mentalism, so let me extend you my hand. That's right, now that you've purchased this book and are studying its contents, I consider you worthy. You know why? Because I said so! And that's just as good as anyone else saying so. But the fact is that you're a mentalist when *you* decide to become one – not when some person, group or organisation decrees that you're one. So if you've made that choice today, welcome to the inner sanctum. Hot tea and coffee are available at the back of the room. Please clean up behind yourself.

About This Book

This book demystifies the secretive and seemingly complex world of mentalism. You discover how to create mind-boggling entertainment for anyone, anytime and anywhere. In this book, I show you step-by-step how to perform illusions that make you seem able to:

- ✓ Read people's minds.
- ✓ Predict what people are going to do before they do it.
- ✓ Move and bend objects without touching them.
- ✓ Tell whether someone is lying or being honest.
- ✓ Transmit thoughts to an entire audience.
- ✓ Recall massive sets of random facts.
- ✓ Memorise an entire deck of cards in under 20 seconds.
- ✓ Communicate with spirits from behind the veil.

Becoming proficient at the tricks that I describe in this book is similar to improving at anything in life. You just have to study, commit what you're studying to memory and, of course, practise. The more you do something, the more you're going to do it properly. Remember, practice doesn't make perfect; perfect practice makes perfect, so you have to get it right. And your practice needs to be in front of a mirror. Whenever an effect calls for you to perform a move that needs to be hidden from others, which is just about all of them, you *must* practise it in front of a mirror. Then, when you think you have it down, get a friend to sit through a private performance to see whether you *flash* (give anything away). Using this approach will help you become a much better performer and your audience will thank you for it through their increased applause.

The effects in this book come from many unique sources and creators: doctors, construction workers, professors, lawyers, actors, television stars, students, police officers and plenty of con artists. They're made up of ideas, tips, suggestions, techniques, methods and concepts that I learned through the years by reading about them, being taught them by other people or coming up with them on my own.

Over the years, hundreds of thousands of individuals have contributed to an extensive body of magic knowledge, which exists today in the form of handwritten notes, papers, pamphlets, newsletters, magazine articles, books,

photographs, audio recordings and videos that can be found throughout the world in cherished personal collections, just like my own that fills every nook and cranny of my home. Perhaps this book is the start of your own collection.

Conventions Used in This Book

I use a few typographical conventions to help you navigate this book's content. Although I keep the number of technical terms at an absolute minimum, mastery of some in-the-know jargon helps you to bluff your way through a performance and convince others that you know more than you do. The conventions are as follows:

- ✓ *Italic* highlights new or special terms that I define nearby and is sometimes used for emphasis.
- ✓ **Boldfaced** text indicates the numbered steps of an effect.

What You're Not to Read

Of course, I want you to read every last morsel this book has to offer, but you run across some parts that you don't *need* to read. As with all *For Dummies* books, this one contains shaded boxes called *sidebars* that contain interesting but non-essential information. That text may be historical background, personal anecdotes or alternative methods to supplement the main paragraphs. If you just want to focus on the meat of the subject, by all means skip these sections.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, I assume that you're interested in mentalism but not that you have any existing knowledge or skills. If you know a little about visual magic, that's fine, but it's by no means necessary to get the most out of this book.

I also assume, because I had to make a decision one way or the other, that you're right-handed. If you're not, you need to swap the hands when following certain instructions.

How This Book Is Organised

I arrange *Mind Magic & Mentalism For Dummies* so that what you look at and when you look at it is up to you. To help guide you to chapters of interest, I divide the book into five parts.

Part I: Going Purely Mental

In this part, you discover some important mentalist basics. In Chapter 1, I provide some brief background to mentalism, the difference between mentalism and visual magic, why mentalism works so well and why you shouldn't use the art to take advantage of others. In Chapter 2, you find out how to develop your performing character and what being honest about lying means. Chapters 3 and 4 help you perform some easy tricks with everyday objects and only a little practice.

Part II: Getting Tricky: Hands-On Mentalism

This part tackles hard-hitting, hands-on, roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-dirty mentalism. Imagine being able to tell whether people are lying just by the way they speak to you, the direction their eyes follow, how fast their hearts are beating or any number of furtive behavioural cues. Well, in Chapter 5 (that covers card-based illusions) I demonstrate one of my pet effects – the *Lie Detector*. You can't really tell whether people are lying, but it sure looks like it! In Chapter 6, you find out how to write without anyone seeing you do it and, in Chapter 7, how to discern hidden info as well as perform an impressive close-up Q&A routine. Oh, wait, I almost forgot to mention that, in Chapter 8, you discover how to use the power of your mind to bend spoons and forks (just like those famous performers on TV) and, in Chapter 9, you get to grips with some of the extra-sensory perception (ESP) lab tests that have fooled scientists over the years.

Part III: Using the Power of Your Mind: Hands-Off Mentalism

The holy grail of mentalism is to be able to perform astonishing feats of the mind without having to touch a thing, and in this part, that's exactly what I

show you how to do. In Chapter 10, you don a blindfold and yet still duplicate exactly what someone draws on a large notepad; and in Chapter 11, you predict a newspaper heading days, weeks, months or even years in advance. Not only that, in Chapter 12 you encounter professional techniques to hypnotise people and, in Chapter 13, speak with loved ones who've 'passed to the other side'. Chapter 14 gives away one of the many mentalist secrets: working with co-conspirators.

Part IV: Performing Bizarre, Strange and Novel Effects

This part leads you into some truly weird areas. Even if you don't like puzzles such as Sudoku and have never touched one in your entire life, Chapter 15 shows you how to solve one in seconds. You also find out how to shove a needle through your arm and instantly heal yourself right in front of someone. Imagine walking down the street, looking up at the sky and then focusing your mental energy before some friends to 'burst a cloud'. If you aren't sure what that means, Chapter 15 will enlighten you. Among other things, Chapter 16 explains how to sap the strength of an audience member, and Chapter 17 demonstrates conducting a séance in which a spirit shows up and communicates with everyone.

Part V: The Part of Tens

Every *For Dummies* book features the Part of Tens. Here, I introduce some mentalists who shook the world of magic (in Chapter 18) and ten reference books that you have to read, read again, put on the shelf for about a year, take back down and then read twice more (in Chapter 19). In Chapter 20, you discover some classic mentalist techniques that, when used properly, make you appear to be a minor deity to anyone lucky enough to witness your excellence.

Icons Used in This Book

Every *For Dummies* book uses friendly icons in the margins to point out certain paragraphs that may be of particular interest to you; *Mind Magic & Mentalism For Dummies* is no exception to that rule. This book uses the following icons:



This helpful icon highlights some particularly useful ideas to save your energy or improve your performances.



This icon indicates essential info that you need to commit to memory.



Heed the text near this icon; it helps you stay out of trouble and avoid embarrassment.



This icon provides you with the secrets of particular effects: in other words, the stuff you don't want your audience reading!

Where to Go from Here

Mind Magic & Mentalism For Dummies is designed to allow you to read whatever section is most relevant to you, when it's most relevant to you. Just use the detailed table of contents and index to find items of interest. If you're looking for a general overview, check out Chapter 1. If your goal is to develop a better understanding of how 'psychics' do what they do, pop straight to Chapter 13 on cold reading.

But remember that mentalism is a complex art composed of interlocking components, and so is this book. Although each chapter is totally self-contained and valuable by itself, reading individual chapters while keeping the others in mind gives you a much better understanding of mentalism and helps you become a better, well-rounded performer. For example, knowing how to perform a trick is just part of the puzzle. Without developing a persona and presentation style (see Chapter 2), you're missing critical elements that can take your performances from okay to super-impressive.

Part I

Going Purely Mental

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Would you please stop trying to guess my number and just hit the 27th floor?"

In this part . . .

Magic comes in a number of varieties, flavours and styles but none is more astounding and utterly confounding to people than mind magic and mentalism. Use this part to become familiar with the idea of plucking perfectly defenseless thoughts from audience members' minds as easy as you might pull a rabbit from a hat.

Chapter 1

Messing with People's Minds without Rabbits or Hats

In This Chapter

- ▶ Introducing magic and mentalism
- ▶ Deceiving the senses
- ▶ Looking into the human brain
- ▶ Examining how mentalism works

For millennia sorcerers, shamans and priests used cunning, sleight of hand, clever ruses, gimmicks, gaffs and props to validate their authority and maintain control over the masses. Over several hundred years, however, the art of conjuring slowly morphed into a respectable form of entertainment. Magicians became admired for their skills instead of feared for their 'miracles'. The nature of mental magic means that mentalists often walk a very fine line between entertainment and psychic fraud.

In this chapter, I provide an introduction to the art of mentalism and the various ways in which you can, and in certain cases should never, use it.

Understanding That Magic Is All in the Mind

A mysterious man stands with his back to a woman on stage. He's almost sinister looking, with his jet-black mane shaved into a widow's peak. Nothing is said between the two people as they draw images on notepads – she draws the first thing that comes into her mind and he sketches the impressions he's receiving from her. They've never met before, but when they turn around and reveal the drawn images, they match perfectly.

Travelling light

Mentalism is simple, but powerful. I love that you don't have to carry around a lot of props. You don't need lions, tigers and bears; oh my, you sure can freak people out with nothing more than a notepad, a black marker pen and some clever patter. I know several performers who carry an entire 45-minute act around in their wallets.

I can stand in front of an audience of 5,000 or more people and perform for two hours with nothing more than a briefcase full of items. Flip to Chapter 4 to find out how to use everyday objects to amaze your friends.

So, where does the magic in this scenario occur:

- ✓ In the lobby before the show when the performer's assistant asks the woman to name her favourite animal (see Chapter 14 on working with co-conspirators)?
- ✓ When that assistant tells the performer the name of the animal just before he steps on the stage?
- ✓ On the stage, when the performer behaves as though he's accessing some deep, dark, secret recess of his mind using extra-sensory perception (ESP) to duplicate the drawing?



The answer is, in none of those places: the magic happens where all magic takes place – *entirely* in the mind. Illusion has never been about the props, gimmicks, methods or sleight of hand that performers use to create effects, but instead is about what happens in the grey matter sitting between the audience's ears. This truth applies even more so with *mentalism*, an art that focuses on performing feats that are 'of the mind' itself.

In this section, I describe mentalism – and clear up a few misconceptions as well.

Drawing the boundaries between mentalism and visual magic

In general, two types of magic exist:

- ✓ **Visual magic:** This traditional side of the art focuses on effects, such as productions, vanishes, transpositions and levitations. Think of guys in evening tails and top hats producing rabbits, changing scarves into doves or escaping from straightjackets on stage.

✓ **Mentalism:** This sort of magic focuses more on mental effects such as the following:

- **Clairvoyance:** Discerning things only with the power of the mind (see Chapters 5, 7 and 14 in particular).
- **Cold reading:** Knowing private information about people simply from talking to them (see Chapter 13).
- **Divination:** Including predicting the future (see Chapter 11).
- **Hypnotism:** Putting people into a sleep-like state so that their minds become susceptible to suggestion (see Chapter 12).
- **Psycho- and telekinesis:** Moving items by willpower or thought alone (see Chapter 8).
- **Remote viewing:** Duplicating an unseen image (see Chapter 10).
- **Secret writing:** Including anticipating events (see Chapter 6).
- **Spirit theatre:** Communicating with 'deceased spirits' (see Chapter 17).
- **Superhuman physical and mental feats:** Lifting heavy objects or stopping volunteers from moving their bodies (see Chapters 15 and 16).
- **Telepathy:** Reading people's minds (see Chapters 5 and 7).

Obviously, all magicians create effects that seemingly defy the known laws of physics, but artists who consider themselves practitioners of the more 'grown up form of magic' (mentalism, in case you haven't guessed) try to distance themselves from visual magic. In fact, many mentalists are dead set against doing anything that may associate what they do with mere magic tricks. Some go so far as to assume a character that does justice to the mystique of the original nineteenth-century Svengali (check out Chapter 2 for more details on creating a performance character).

Such purists are quick to point out that, if you do mix visual magic and mental effects, you're performing not mentalism but *mental magic* (a pejorative term).

Actually, I feel that mentalists who insist they're not magicians need to get over themselves; their attitude is incredibly arrogant and quite laughable. No difference exists technically in the illusions, and a person's choice of character and presentation doesn't negate this obvious fact.

Separating mentalists from psychologists and psychics

In recent years, hordes of performers have begun mixing conjuring techniques theatrically with body-language interpretation, hypnotism and self-help trends such as neuro-linguistic programming. The resulting 'demonstrations' are unique, interesting, entertaining and more palatable because everything seems so credible. After all, it's science!



The truth is that these performers are faking it. If they relied on scientific experiments, they'd be less precise, less consistent and certainly less entertaining!

Although mentalists do use psychology in their performances in front of audiences, they aren't *psychologists* (trained professionals concerned with the scientific study of the mind and human emotions). Whereas psychologists use science to test and prove theories that are subsequently used in positive ways to better society, mentalists are entertainers who pretend to have abilities they don't actually possess. Acting the part and performing are crucial to mentalism, as I describe in Chapter 2.



Acting is also involved when mentalists perform illusions connected to 'psychic readings' and spiritualism, but crucially mentalists do so as part of an overall show of entertainment. In contrast, so-called *psychics* or *mediums* prey on society dishonestly by (mis)using mentalist skills, tools and techniques to defraud the public.

Although many mentalists and magicians may be willing to discuss their methods with scientists conducting legitimate studies, most psychics with any interest in self-preservation avoid that kind of scrutiny like a cockroach does the light. They know that the best way to stay in business is to avoid bringing attention to what they do and how they do it. Granted, some more enterprising psychics have made themselves available for 'testing' in an effort to garner reward and publicity, especially if they are confident that they can fool the people conducting the studies. But any success has always been attributed to poorly planned, controlled and executed tests. In Chapter 9, I describe some of the tests carried out on claimed psychics.

The sad fact is that anyone can suddenly declare themselves to be a psychic: the field is wide open, unregulated, and you don't have to get a licence or pass a background check. (If you find a psychic with a degree displayed on the wall, it's going to be pretty meaningless.) That's why a rather disproportionate number of criminals, oddballs and unsavoury characters enter the fray every year and begin reading palms, telling the future and selling bunkum to an uninitiated public.

Investigating the Art of Extra-Sensory Deception

Throughout much of history, magic was nearly always about power, position and money. From the magicians of the Bible to the Oracle at Delphi, documented anthropological and archaeological evidence reveals that these people used natural means to produce supposedly supernatural effects. And so long as everyone remained ignorant of the simple scientific principles used to create magic, those who claimed divine right to remain in power did so.

Ironically, that same science eventually helped to limit those people's continued influence. With the advent of increased literacy and wider education, societies quickly matured and began to challenge illogical superstitions. The resulting shift turned sorcerers' tools into a performer's art.

Unfortunately, mentalists were responsible for blurring the line between visual magic and sorcery. Some members of the public still have no idea that mentalists use their five senses to create the *illusion* of a sixth. The resulting discrepancy creates an environment in which mentalists aren't recognised as the magicians they are; this confusion empowers and emboldens some people to pose as psychics and take advantage of others.

Spotting the modern fakers

Wherever you look on TV or in bookshops, more and more people claim to have ESP today than ever before. And for a fee, a lot of them are happy to connect you with your deceased loved ones, predict your future, help you find love, wealth and happiness, pretend to assist the police in finding kidnapped children and (perhaps most despicably) cure ailments such as arthritis, AIDS and cancer.

Here's the essence of the problem. If I pluck a coin from the air and then make it vanish, only if you've grown up isolated on an island will you believe the illusion is real; you appreciate the skill but know that the performance is clearly a sleight of hand trick. But the idea of someone accessing the most private recesses of your mind is an entirely different thing and the event is even more convincing if no *obvious* connection exists to traditional conjuring.

To the casual observer, mentalism is a pretty difficult art to comprehend and can appear very real, which isn't necessarily a bad thing unless people are left to believe that what they see is real.



Looking at psychics

Apparently, 'a sucker's born every minute', which means that plenty of trusting and gullible people are always around to be taken advantage of. Unfortunately, duping people can have serious consequences. Con artists have stripped people of their life savings while pretending to be helping them spiritually; truly ill people have stopped taking their medication or seeking medical assistance because faith healers have said they're going to be okay.

In his book *The Psychic Mafia*, reformed medium M. Lamar Keene writes that, 'Most mediums are what psychiatrists call sociopathic. They have

a moral block, a defective conscience. Things that other people consider wrong, they consider legitimate. Cheating, lying, stealing, conning – these things are sanctified in the ethics of mediumship.' And according to the US National Academy of Sciences, 'no scientific justification from research conducted over a period of 130 years [confirms] the existence of parapsychological phenomena'.

Psychics (and in fairness, mentalists too) have no special powers at all – except a well-honed ability to deceive you.

The same tricks that I can perform can also be used by psychics. Maybe not every psychic is a fake, but my instincts tell me that if it sounds like a duck, walks like a duck and swims like a duck – it's probably a quack pretending to be a psychic.

Taking account of ethical and legal considerations

Every year, psychics flood the police with fanciful tips that they claim can help detectives solve a given crime. These calls waste valuable resources when officers have to investigate them. Even worse, the police can ignore other tips that are real and may really help the investigation.

Unethical behaviour can come in other forms, too. I know of a mentalist in New York who takes the psychological route and pretends to be able to read people by assessing facial expressions and furtive behavioural cues. He pretends to have the same abilities as *The Mentalist* on TV. In fact, he's using mentalism to create that illusion for some pretty major clients – namely, the FBI. Like so-called psychic detectives, this guy is a charlatan, and the moment a government agency takes him seriously, its putting cases and people's lives in jeopardy.

Causing suffering

In 1999, a well-known self-proclaimed psychic, Sylvia Browne, appeared on a television show and provided a reading for the grandmother of Opal Jo Jennings, a six-year-old child who'd been abducted. Browne told Mrs Jennings: 'She's not dead . . . she was taken and put into some kind of a slavery thing and taken to

Japan.' In fact, she'd been murdered by Richard Lee Franks within hours of her kidnapping.

This example is but one of many horrifying instances in which information 'learned through psychic means' turns out to be completely false. Sylvia Browne is not alone, by any stretch of the imagination.



I'm talking about something pretty sinister here. Consider this fact: in most jurisdictions around the world, the definition of fraud (in both criminal and civil law) is intentionally deceiving someone for personal gain. Few exceptions to that reality exist. Bear that in mind and only use your mentalism skills to entertain an audience.

Bamboozling the Brain

This book is almost entirely about tricks, techniques and patter (the way you script and present an effect verbally) that you can use to create illusions in people's minds. Given that, in this section I take a closer look at what happens in the brain. The more you understand about how the human brain works, the easier entertaining an audience with your mentalism act becomes.

Fooling the eyes: Optical illusions

No doubt you're familiar with optical illusions from images in books (such as those by M. C. Escher): an *optical illusion* is where something you see differs from objective reality.

Mentalists use optical illusions all the time. For example, if you toss a coin from hand to hand and at the last moment clip it under your thumb whilst pretending to complete the 'toss' and close your fist, people swear blind (no pun intended) that they *saw* it land in your hand. If you shake an already-bent fork back and forth rapidly and then gradually slow it down, the fork appears to be bending in front of someone's eyes (check out Chapter 8 for more on performing effects with cutlery).

Misdirecting: Cognitive illusions

Cognition is concerned with how the brain processes information – in other words, the ways in which humans know things. In regards to mentalism, one of the most important cognitive processes is attention and how people can (or can't) efficiently pay attention to different objects or trains of thought simultaneously. Conjurors are already masters of manipulating attention, but the more you understand about how attention works, the more effective you can be as a mentalist performer.



Contrary to popular belief, mentalists don't multi-task but switch from one singular task to another in rapid succession. They can, however, split their concentration, focus and attention. With a little effort and practice, mentalists can easily engage a person's attention and keep it focused on the wrong thing, at the right time, to produce a desired effect. This technique is known as *misdirection* and can be done in two distinct ways:

- ✓ *Overt misdirection* is the equivalent of the old movie gag in which someone points and says, 'hey, look over there. . .' and then runs in the opposite direction. When a magician lights flash paper, he's getting you to look at the pretty bright light while he secretly reaches under his jacket to produce a rose.
- ✓ *Covert misdirection* is more subtle in its application. A great example is the Invisible Gorilla experiment, in which you're asked to focus on two teams of basketball players – one dressed in white and the other in black. Your task is to count accurately how many times players on the white team pass the ball to one another. The harder you focus on the players, the less likely you are to see the gorilla that walks right through the scene, turns toward the camera, beats its chest and walks off. Believe it or not, people *do* miss the gorilla – a lot.

Two examples of misdirection

Here's a great example of misdirection that saved countless lives. In the Second World War, the Allies hired a magician to set up fake tanks in one location, so that the Nazis wouldn't see the real tanks coming from another. This illusion aided the success of the Normandy invasion and helped change the tide of battle in Europe.

Change blindness is an extremely effective misdirection technique. Mentalist Derren Brown

approached people on the street for directions. While showing a person a map, an assistant interrupted them carrying a large over-sized photo of Derren and abruptly passed between them. At that precise moment, Derren traded places with the assistant holding the board and quickly walked away. The assistant re-engaged the subject on Derren's behalf – and few people noticed the change.

Misdirection works in magic tricks because mentalists are able to draw the focus of an audience's suspicion away *without* redirecting where their eyes look. The military calls this outcome *tunnel vision* and it happens frequently when a task requires a great deal of effort or is exceedingly stressful. Tunnel vision is also why people who text and drive are more likely to have accidents than people who don't.

Leaving nothing to chance: Illusions of choice

If during a performance you hear a mentalist recap what's just happened by saying, 'and you freely chose', you can be sure that you didn't (check out the later section 'Making connections . . . wrongly: How people "know" what isn't so' for more on this type of patter). Because of the way the brain works, we magicians and mentalists tap into that programming and create situations that appear to be legitimate choices, but in fact are not (Chapter 20 briefly discusses the concept of 'equivoque' – also known as the 'magician's choice').



To illustrate the illusion of choice, try something right now:

1. **Grab a pen and paper or a calculator.**
2. **Pick a three-digit number where the first and last digits are different by at least a couple of numbers (I use '387' as an example, but use something else to avoid defeating the purpose).**
3. **Reverse the number (my first example would be '783').**
4. **Subtract the smaller number from the larger number (using mine, the answer is $783 - 387 = 396$).**
5. **Reverse that number (using my number yields '693').**
6. **Add that number to the total from Step 4 (which in my case was 396).**

I guarantee that you have a total of 1089. Whatever number you pick, the outcome is always the same and results from what's called a *mathematical force*. Of course, mentalists don't use this force in an obvious manner; they integrate it into wider routines.



Mentalists don't leave things to chance and you can use both certainty (of numbers and maths, as I describe in Chapter 3) and ambiguity (see Chapters 5 and 20 about forcing people to choose particular items) to your advantage. Mentalists never let people have a free choice.

Messing with the past: Memory illusions

Every day, everything you see, hear, feel, taste and smell is captured by your senses and stored in your brain. Because their brains are so full of random information, all humans can forget things they've done, 'remember' things they've not done and miss an event that's happening right in front of their faces.

All humans are fallible and yet most people don't realise that false memories are integral to the human condition. They may go unnoticed, but everyone has them. You can imagine how such occurrences can prove problematic – for example, when they involve witnesses to crime – but under most circumstances having false memories is pretty benign (and they help mentalists a lot!).

The way people recall memories is ripe for manipulation. Uri Geller is a master of manipulation. His act involves bending cutlery with the power of his mind. He states, 'I never touched it as it bent', which people then interpret as meaning that his hands *never* touched the spoon at any point – either before or during the performance. The more they repeat what he says, the more people come to believe it as fact. Check out Chapter 18 for more on Geller and nine more mentalists.

Playing with expectations and assumptions

Have you ever looked at a pen and consciously thought, 'That's a pen; I can write with that'? Of course you haven't. Whenever you need to write something down, you just reach for a pen and go for it. You do so because your brain has a pattern of expectation for what pens do and how you can use them. As a result, you assume certain things about a pen when you see one. In other words, you know for certain that a pen is a pen is a pen. Of course, a mentalist also knows that you know that a pen is a pen – and can use that to trick you during a performance.

Try the following example of how your expectations can let you down. Read the following sentence:

EVERY DAY I WALK BY THE SHORE TO COLLECT SHELLS AND
AND DIP MY TOES INTO THE WARM TROPICAL WATER.

Did you catch the duplicate 'and' at the front of the second line? What about the following sentence; how many Fs can you find?

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY
COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY YEARS.

Most people, including yours truly, miss the Fs in the word 'of'. If you found all six Fs, you're good to go. But don't feel bad if you didn't get them all – that's how the brain works.

One of my favourite illusions which plays on assumptions is bending a signed coin as if by the power of my mind. I can do this effect in a number of ways, but I prefer to exploit the way the human mind works and the assumptions it makes about the surrounding world. I use a specially-designed gimmick that looks exactly like an ordinary marker pen. Here's how I perform this illusion:

1. I hand you a penny.
2. I bring out a marker pen and ask you to sign the coin. You do so.
3. I show you how you can attempt to bend the coin between your fingers and ask you to try it.
4. I switch the real pen for the gimmick pen while you're trying (of course, you can't bend the penny).
5. I reach back into my pocket, pull out a larger coin and trade you for the penny by saying, 'Try this, it's bigger, and so maybe you can get more leverage'.
6. The moment you try to bend the bigger coin, I use the gimmick pen to bend the penny right under your nose *because your brains sees the pen and assumes it's the real one.*



Most people never dream that a solid steel replica of a marker pen designed to bend coins actually exists, let alone that I may have one. When people see a pen, they assume that it's a pen. The fact that you just signed the coin is an added 'convincer', which ensures that your mind assumes the gimmick pen I bring out in front of you is the very pen that you used moments before to sign the coin. Your brain fills in the gaps based on your previous experience and sets itself on autopilot.

Illusory correlations

In the early 1980s, I saw a TV advertisement for a series of books on the unexplained. A woman reaches for a pan on the stove and is burned. The pan crashes to the floor. As the action happens, a man's voice begins to speak: 'You burn yourself and across the country your daughter suddenly feels a searing pain in her hand!' Mysteriously, the voice then asks: 'Coincidence?' Even as a child I remember thinking, 'Duh, that's what coincidence means!' However, many people automatically think that the two separate events correlate to one another, when they don't. These two events had nothing to do with one another, but parapsychologists and people who want to believe in psychic events generally see them as related simply because they apparently occurred simultaneously.

The woman who burns her hand will certainly feel pain. Her daughter's pain, however, is attributable to something completely different; she may have an ongoing medical condition, for example.

In mentalism, an audience can be made to experience the same sense of connection – especially if you tell them a connection exists. I can make one member of an audience 'feel' me touch her from across the room when I touch another person on the shoulder (see Chapter 8 for more on this illusion). I use invisible thread to create this illusion; I actually touch person A by rubbing my finger on their skin and at the same time touch person B with the thread that's unseen. I appear to use psychic power, but I don't. Participants A and B will naturally correlate the two events when, in reality, something entirely different is happening.

Using Human Weaknesses: Why Mentalism Works

Human beings are fascinated by patterns and compelled to see order in the universe. When these things are lacking, they're happy to invent them and create sometimes spurious connections between things and events. In this section, I demonstrate that human reasoning is fallible and show how mentalists take advantage of it.

Being susceptible: Why people believe strange things

'One person's strange belief is another's logical conclusion.' By 'strange', I mean a claim that most experts in a given field don't accept, that's illogical or improbable and for which the vast majority of evidence supporting it is anecdotal in nature and can't be corroborated. Some strange things that I'd be

hesitant to believe in are the existence of aliens and ghosts, that Elvis is still alive and currently works as a hairdresser in Texas, that crop circles are anything but some industrious people walking through a corn field with boards and a well-thought out plan and that Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* is a historical document.

People choose to believe in such things for a variety of reasons, including defective thinking, but mostly because they just want to. The allure of having some kind of information about the future or an ability to communicate with loved ones who've passed to the other side can be intoxicating. People don't lack the intellectual capacity to tell the difference between fact and fiction or between science and crack-pot pseudoscience – they simply decide to suspend disbelief in favour of the comfort these kinds of beliefs offer them. As a mentalist, I use that tendency people have to suspend disbelief to my advantage during the performance of illusions so the impact on those watching is more entertaining. Those who pretend to have psychic abilities use this tendency to their advantage to fleece the public.

Making connections . . . wrongly: How people 'know' what isn't so

When I was a kid, people were freaking out because 'Satan' was supposedly supernaturally implanting messages in popular music. Being somewhat adventurous, if not morbidly curious, I played Led Zeppelin's 'Stairway to Heaven' backwards. Instead of 'if there's a bustle in your hedgerow . . . it's just a spring clean for the May queen', I'm pretty sure I heard 'the Devil is my plaything' eerily screech from the speakers. I didn't sleep well that night. But did I really hear what I think I heard?

Where nothing is present, humans 'see' connections. More often than not, they unconsciously misinterpret random information and reconstruct it in what they think is a coherent way. The card must be up the magician's sleeve, because it's close to his hand and he was holding the card in that hand. When the card disappears, we naturally think, 'Well, it must have slipped up the sleeve out of sight'. The sleeve is the most 'logical' place for the card to go because of its proximity, but it could just as easily go to the back of the hand, held clipped between the fingers, and placed out of sight, thus creating the impression that it's vanished – when it hasn't.

When only vague and incomplete information is available, people rack their brains until they can fill in the gaps; they then accept their conclusion as being accurate. That's why cold reading works so well and a psychic who guesses wrongly 22 times before hitting on one correct thing is remembered by the audience as being gifted (I describe cold reading in Chapter 13). This

phenomenon is called *confirmation bias* and is also why people think generic horoscopes are specifically written for them, even though the publishing newspaper has a circulation of 375,000 readers.



Over 100 years ago, the naturalist Charles Darwin said that humans are quick to remember the things that support their views, and quick to forget anything that conflicts with what they want to believe.

Using your verbal skills: Fallacies and illogical thinking

A performer who focuses on visual magic can perform an entire act without speaking; a mentalist can't. Mentalists use the power of words to sell their illusions, which is why they don't go on international tours; the language barrier can get in the way of success.

Scores of different types of logical fallacies illustrate how poor thinking can get people into trouble. Would you, for example, believe the recommendation of a sports star who's endorsing a pair of trainers even though he's not a podiatrist? Logically, you wouldn't.

More importantly, understanding fallacies helps you develop your mentalist art. Here's an example of an *inductive fallacy*, which involves applying the reasoning from one specific premise to make a general conclusion:



- ✓ **Premise:** A deck of cards consists of 52 different cards.
- ✓ **Conclusion:** All decks of cards consist of 52 different cards.
- ✓ **Fact:** A one-way force deck comprises 51 cards that are all the same and one indifferent card (that doesn't matter).

If you casually give someone a quick look by turning your hand face up to show the bottom card, it will reinforce their assumptions about the deck. If you stop and think about it, we've all seen a deck of cards at some point, and we naturally rely on our previous experience showing that all the backs are the same and all the faces are different. It's what we know to be a fact based on our knowledge to date of all the decks of cards we've ever seen. But that does not mean that other types of decks don't exist. Those patterns are easily used to fool people because the person sees the one card on the bottom that's flashed, the one card that's different, and makes the assumption that *all* of the cards are different; it never occurs to them that the rest of the deck could be identical. So when you spread the deck face down and someone chooses a card, it *will* be different to the one they saw. This difference confirms the premise and the assumption. You can now perform a number of spectacular effects.

Chapter 2

Playing the Part of a Mentalist

In This Chapter

- ▶ Identifying the essential qualities of a good mentalist
- ▶ Building a successful performing 'you'
- ▶ Going the extra mile

The nineteenth-century French conjuror Jean-Eugene Robert-Houdin is famously quoted as saying that a magician is an actor playing the part of a magician. In the same vein, a mentalist is an actor playing the part of a magician, who's playing the part of a medium or psychic.

This chapter describes how you can play this role successfully. I discuss the essential characteristics that make up a successful mentalist personality and guide you toward building your own unique yet recognisable persona that allows your tricks not only to be utterly convincing but also truly entertaining. I also provide hints on getting ahead of the pack and becoming the best mentalist that you can be.

Understanding What Makes a Successful Mentalist

Leo Tolstoy said: 'Art is a human activity having for its purpose the transmission to others of the highest and best feelings to which men have risen.' A tall order – I think you'll agree – but one that I believe is worthy not only of consideration but also aspiration. For me, the 'essential qualities' that every mentalist needs to possess are uniqueness, humility, honesty, empathy and integrity.

I see mentalism as an art form, and to me, art has two central aims:



- ✓ **Self-expression:** Mentalism is a medium for expressing yourself; where other people use painting or music, you're expressing something of yourself through your mentalism. Therefore, your performances need to be sincere and wholehearted, containing a piece of your heart and soul so that they resonate with audiences.
- ✓ **Communication:** Mentalism is a way to communicate with others in a meaningful way. Artists don't paint to hide their pictures away and musicians don't spend years composing an opus with the sole intent of depriving people of hearing it. Art is about *other people*.

Too many mentalists forget that their art isn't about fooling people, but about entertaining them. Some get so wrapped up in the idea that they can do things other people can't, that the ability goes to their heads.

Mentalism is at its best when creating moments of astonishment in people's lives, not when used as an opportunity to make you look important. Because too many performers follow the second approach, many people see magic as a second-rate profession at best, or boring and offensive at worst. As a mentalist, you have the opportunity to make a difference by sharing amazing theatre with people that moves them and resonates deep within them so that their view of our art is shaped by positive, uplifting and incredible performances, rather than the opposite.



Make sure that your technical proficiency doesn't cause you to neglect the performance side of things; having the ability to fool others should never lead to arrogance.

Recognising the essential mentalist characteristics

When you're building and creating a persona and an act that's valuable to you and your audiences, certain principles can help you along the way. After all, your performing character is a brand, just like Nike, McDonald's or BMW. Heed the principles I describe in this section, and you'll go far.

Being unique

Mentalism is a vehicle for expressing yourself to the world, and so you want to do this in a unique way. Everyone's personality contains something special and unique. Your mission is to capture your uniqueness and apply it to how you perform. Make no mistake: *you* are your biggest asset – not the tricks of the trade you're discovering in this book.

Of course, you don't start off as a unique performing personality. Every established artist developed and progressed in mentalism by copying and borrowing from other performers. This very normal process is fundamental to the art of mentalism and starts with imitation, leads to appropriation and progresses to innovation and uniqueness. You buy a book like this one or watch a DVD, and copy what you read or see. As you mature, so does your knowledge base and your ability to express yourself more creatively.

The directive 'be yourself' has been so overused that it's become a cliché, but nonetheless, it contains a vitally important truth: you are unique. Most people's characters are an expression or exaggeration of their own personalities. As a mentalist, how you are, how you think and how you feel all determine the style, content and tone of your performance and the type of effects you create, as well as literally everything else that makes up who you are as an artist.

Remaining identifiable

The moment you walk on stage the audience needs to be able to size you up and tell who you are from how you present yourself.

For example, Max Maven, a mentalist from California with jet-black hair and an ultra-pronounced widow's peak, projects a mysterious Svengali-esque persona through his looks alone. He speaks with intelligence, eloquence and the commanding authority you expect from that kind of character. Max Maven even legally changed his name to fit his chosen persona!



You don't need to go that far – just ensure that the strongest elements of who you are and what you stand for are easily recognisable and understood.

Keeping your performing character interesting

Here's a blunt fact: boring performances from a boring character result in dead careers. If you're not interesting to the people you perform for, you aren't going to be performing for long. You don't get repeat bookings, your shows have short runs and so on.



Developing an appealing, likeable and affable performing character is critical. Find that part of you and what you do that's interesting, and magnify it. Appealing traits attract audiences and keep their attention.

Displaying charisma

People with a compelling attractiveness and demonstrable power, authority or talent enjoy the most success in life. That certain distinctive quality – *je ne sais quoi*, the 'X-factor', call it what you will – can be hard to pinpoint but it's

undeniably present and permeates every aspect of a successful performing personality. This charisma is the mysterious and sometime elusive 'connection' that you make with an audience.

Developing believability

Seeing a magician levitate on the TV can make you shout 'fake!' and change channel because the performance is almost an insult to your intelligence.

Your performing character has to be sincere and believable even if what you're doing is utterly unbelievable. People turn off mentally if you present yourself in a disingenuous manner (check out the later section 'Being sincere' for more info). The easiest way to do that is to connect with the people you are performing for; to develop rapport. Making eye contact, mirroring their mannerisms, speaking with authority are all behaviours you can implement that will improve your believability.



Your audience members aren't stupid, and so never treat them that way.

Maintaining consistency

Your on-stage character needs to be entirely congruent with every other aspect of who you are. Consistency has the natural effect of making your performing character more effective, and you can't be believable as a performer if you're not consistent with your own character.

Make sure that every aspect of who you are and how you express yourself complements every other area in your life, and vice versa. The magician David Blaine is a great example; he exudes mystery by refraining from extensive dialogue with those he performs for. His monotone and dry approach extends well beyond the television screen into his daily life – or at least that's what the public gets to see. I've only seen David 'break character' twice, in all the years I've known him. I have enormous respect for David personally, for what he's accomplished, and for how he's positively impacted the art of mentalism. If you want to learn anything in life, model others. You can learn a lot by watching David Blaine and the way he interacts with the people he performs for. His consistency is obvious and noteworthy.

Of course, some contrasting traits will be evident between your own personality and your persona on stage, but keep these to a minimum or your audience will spot them. Every major brand in the world is built on the knowledge that congruency and consistency are vital to commercial success. Likewise, if you follow that rule your performing persona is sure to be successful, too.

Noting other essential attributes for success

To be a successful mentalist and become known as a great performer, you need to develop a character who connects with an audience and create a 'brand' that not only makes a lasting impression but also lasts. This section shows you how.

Knowing your place

Most professional basketball players are tall, *really* tall. I'm not even averagely tall and most definitely not basketball tall. Although I love the game, I always knew that I'd never play professionally. In other words, I know my place. The plain truth is that this white man can't jump!



Building a successful performing mentalist character includes understanding who you really are, which means being honest with yourself and your audience. If you can't pull off a role, don't try to push a square peg through a circular hole.

Being sincere

Some years ago I was introduced to a would-be politician. When we shook hands, he seemed uninterested and insincere. As our hands grasped, he looked over my shoulder and everywhere but at me. In response, I tightened my grip and pulled him in, put my head in his line of site to make eye contact and respectfully said, 'You're talking to me right now'. That threw him and he quickly focused on my face and apologised. He didn't get my vote, though, because he'd made it clear (by accident!) that I didn't matter to him at that moment – if at all.

Trust me, audiences know whether they matter to you or not. If you're heart isn't in a performance, the people who paid for your show (and your salary) realise it. This 'distance' distracts from the experience – something I felt when I went to see one of my favourite magicians in Las Vegas. David Copperfield is a man I've long admired and respected. In my early years, his TV specials had a pretty major impact on me as a performer. On the few occasions I've met him in person, he's been truly gracious, affable and polite. But when I took my family to see him perform a few years ago, the show felt disconnected – as if he was going through the motions and had lost his heart for performing. That's too bad.

Acting natural

Humans interpret – take meaning from – what they experience, both what they hear and see, through a complicated, vague mixture of emotional thought processes. Although mentalism features words (and your patter is crucial; see the later section ‘Working hard on scripting and patter’), much of what you do when performing is non-verbal, subtle and often unconscious. Thus the better you become as a performer, the less you actually have to say.

Method acting is worthy of investigation, study and application for any serious mentalist, because the art is all about being believable. When we communicate with each other, we naturally, without thought, display micro-expressions on our face such as lines around our eyes, movements by the lips and tension in the forehead that are almost impossible to recreate unless you’re actually experiencing a given emotion. We all recognise those expressions and can tell when someone is really sad or when they’re putting on a show for the camera. That’s why lots of actors look like they’re faking it – because they’re not recreating the emotion within themselves, but merely pretending to feel the given emotion. By simulating the thoughts and emotions your character would experience, you’re likely to convey the body language associated with those emotions. This makes the moment ‘feel’ more real to anyone watching, and is the reason you can watch a show and cry when someone else is weeping. The more you can hone your ability to ‘feel’ what you’re performing, the more your audience experience it with you.



Draw upon your own personal experiences and inject them into the scene or patter you’re performing. To find out more about method acting, check out the work of Lee Strasberg; he was a giant in the industry who taught greats such as Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman and Jack Nicholson.

Staying relaxed

Take the advice of Frankie Goes to Hollywood and ‘relax’! If you’re nervous in front of people, you can’t create the environment you want. That said, practising in front of people and working through your fear is the best way to get over your nerves.



Even people who speak in front of huge audiences every year still get nervous; the key is not showing it. Read books on public speaking, take acting lessons or attend workshops on improving your confidence and thus reducing your nerves.

Using the right props and equipment

Mentalism has a major advantage over magic, in that you don’t need lots of expensive props or equipment. You can actually perform a two-hour show with nothing more than a pencil and a piece of paper.



Whatever you do, when you develop your performing character and an act, make sure that the props you use are compatible with your persona and the effects you perform. For example, if your act involves using lots of envelopes, consider using a special letter opener that can inject notes inside them.

If you want to convey that you can predict the future, put a large box in plain view during your show and then open it at the end to reveal key facts that emerged during your performance. As in anything in the entertainment world, use things that make sense. If you're a dark and sinister character, having bubbles floating around on stage doesn't make sense; skulls, candles, smoke and darkness might. If you're light and bubbly, don't perform on a darkened stage. If you're a children's entertainer, bright colours should do the trick. Match your props and tools to fit your motif.

Admitting that you're performing an act (or not)

Many mentalists believe that performers should only present their tricks as if they're the real thing. I find that approach bordering on the immoral. I've never been able to understand why some performers seem so desperate for the uninitiated public to believe that their magic tricks are real. I'd rather be myself than try to live a lie. For this reason, I'm quite happy to use a *disclaimer*, a public denial of supernatural ability; in other words, I prefer to be honest about my 'dishonesty'.

Adopting a policy of honest dishonesty pays off, I feel. For instance, the Scottish medium D. D. Home was never caught cheating or using any props, stooges or tricks and many people at the time believed that he was a real psychic – yet nobody remembers him now. In contrast, Houdini not only recreated what fraudulent psychics were doing during his lifetime, but also purposefully went out of his way to expose them. He was honest and as a result is one of the most famous illusionists of all time.

Some mentalists try to keep one foot on either side of the fence. They disclaim, but do so using double-speak, which allows them to still sound mysterious. Famed performer Joseph Dunninger used to say, 'For those who believe, no explanation is necessary. For those who don't believe, no explanation is possible.' Notable mentalist Banachek likes to say, 'I'll not tell you what I do is real, but then again I won't tell you it isn't.' One of the more interesting disclaimers I've ever heard was issued by Homer Scarborough, who said:

I don't claim to exercise any psychic or magical powers that you can't also demonstrate provided you put in the same amount of study and practice that I have.

I've even heard someone say, 'I'm too sceptical to believe anything is impossible.' I love that one!

Ultimately, your preferred approach to performance is up to you. But I can tell you that the closer you fly to the flame, the more likely you are to get burned. If you're honest, you're going to be more successful in life. Keep this fact in mind while you develop your character, because the decision you make is one that may have serious consequences – not just for you, but for those you perform for.



Stick to this tried-and-true disclaimer: 'I use my five senses to create the illusion of a sixth.'

Creating Your Personal Mentalist Character

Character development – generally, and in relation to your mentalist performances – is all about figuring 'you' out. You have to be willing to look at yourself in the mirror and be honest about who you are and who you want to become. People who are willing to analyse themselves closely tend to be more successful in life. This section describes some ways to get you moving in the right direction toward developing a successful performing character.

Answering a few questions

The questions in the following list help you to think about yourself and perhaps uncover aspects that you've previously taken for granted:

- ✓ **How old are you? How old do you look? How old do you want to be? How old do you behave? How old should you behave?**

Age plays a big role in your persona or character. The younger you are, the more difficulty you have persuading an audience that you're wise or have authority. Likewise, the older you get, the harder you can find pulling off something goofy, young and immature. Societal norms and expectations influence how we view people around us. Ensure that your character is age appropriate to the type of show and persona you want to share with an audience.

- ✓ **What are your physical characteristics? Do you have amazing locks? Do you sport a handlebar moustache? Do you have killer tattoos, beautiful skin or elegant posture?**

You can use how you 'look' to an audience to your advantage, or you can find it a hindrance to developing a specific type of character you desire. A good mentalist friend of mine has incredible neck and face

tattoos. Recently, he's felt that this look has pigeonholed him. The fact is that everything an audience sees when you perform plays a part in deciding who you are as a mentalist.

✓ **How do you express yourself when you're happy, sad, angry, amused or in love?**

Scores of emotions exist. Examine how you behave, how you think and how you communicate when experiencing these emotions, and use what you discover as part of creating a real, convincing performing persona.

✓ **What do you like most about and least about yourself?**

The good and bad qualities that you see in yourself, others see too. They can be a hindrance or an asset to your performing character.

✓ **What one word would your friends use if you asked them to describe you? How would they describe you in a sentence, a paragraph, a page or a book?**

Think about what your friends might say and how you may interpret the information. What do they love about you? What do they dislike about you? What do they respect and admire most?

✓ **What are your favourite things? What are your interests? Do you like sport? Do you like music? Do you love to travel? What kind of activities make you happy?**

Ask yourself what kind of nourishment warms your soul. What are your favourite book and film? Apart from mentalism, what hobbies do you enjoy? These questions help you understand yourself better so that you can build an act that's congruent with who you are. The more congruent your act is, the more it resonates with the audience. You need to create performances that 'fit' with you and who you are.

✓ **What do you like to wear? What kind of clothing does it for you? Do you prefer a suit over a more casual look?**

Get specific. Do you like hats? What's your favourite colour? How do the clothes you currently wear make you feel? Do they properly represent you and how you want to be seen by the rest of the world?

✓ **What are the most important values to you?**

For example, I believe that integrity is the only thing that nobody can take from you (although you can give it away). I also value kindness. How about you?

✓ **What character traits do you prefer?**

Imagine yourself as the lead character in a film. Who would you be? The hero, the villain or the funny guy? Are you dramatic, tragic, romantic, intelligent, outgoing or diplomatic? Come up with your ideal character and then be it.

Writing down your goals

According to 'personal success' coaches, people who write down their goals and plans are far more likely to accomplish them. Gurus often cite a 1950s university study that corroborates such a claim.

Ironically, though it's been referenced in numerous self-help books, this study is an urban myth. Even so, people believed it and because they believed it, they put it into action. Evidence now does support the idea that if you write down everything you want to do, every aspect of your mentalism character and every intimate detail of your performance, the effort pays off.

Write down a list of what you want to achieve – now! Set out a plan of action, with manageable steps. Writing things down helps you visualise them; it gives them a sense of reality and permanence.

Working hard on scripting and patter

Rarely are stage shows, television programmes or films made without a script. Likewise, the script is of the utmost importance if you want to present a mentalism effect professionally.



To write a great script, consider every detail. Don't approach the task as a chore, but as a wonderful opportunity to ensure that your mentalism resonates and connects with your audience.

The script describes everything that happens during an effect, or collectively a show, from the audience's perspective – not yours. The beauty of this approach is that it helps you to look at effects and your performing character differently; consequently, you become a better performer. That's a promising prospect; you need to take seriously anything you can do to improve your performing abilities.

Don't let the idea of writing a script freak you out; scripts are actually pretty easy to put together. When you sit down for the first time to write one, you may feel a little intimidated, but before long you get the hang of what you're doing. Check out books on screen writing for ideas. Check out *Scripting Magic* (Pete McCabe, 2008); it offers advice from people who also really understand the art of mentalism.



Focus on finding out how to write and lay out screenplays, because that format also offers the best structure for writing mentalism scripts.

Ensuring that everything in your performance has a reason

Displaying a logical motivation is an important aspect of having a good performing character and producing a great show. From the specific movements you make to what you say, you need to make sure that every element of an effect (in fact, every element of a show) is logically pieced together. When movements are illogical or seem out of place, people spot it.



Script every aspect of your show and ensure a logical flow (flip to the preceding section for more on scripts). Figure out every little aspect, no matter how small, so that it has a reason behind it: from what you wear to the props you use; from the things you do to the things you say, when you say them and how you say them.

Paring down to essentials: Chipping away anything that's not David

When the famous artist Michelangelo was asked how he'd created his sculptural masterpiece *David*, he replied that all he did was chip away anything that wasn't David. And actually, that's far from a trite answer!

When producing your performing character and act, you need to chip away anything that doesn't add value; anything that isn't really you. Be honest. Look in the mirror and, if an action, gesture, line or whatever doesn't belong, remove it. Why are you wearing that jacket? Why did you step there? Why did you use that particular music cue? Why did you get that piercing? Should you wear that ring? Should you talk like that? Everything matters. Get down to the nuts and bolts of who you are, what you stand for and why you do what you do, when and how you should do it. People are smart and audiences are discerning.

Maximising Your Mentalism

If you want to take mentalism seriously, don't settle for less than being the best you possibly can be. This section shows you how to produce that extra piece of magic (if you'll forgive the pun).

Being entertaining

Anything that can keep your audience's attention is great: whether it's your grandmother on a lazy Sunday afternoon, a group of friends out at the pub or 5,000 people in a theatre. Your goal as an entertainer – and that's what mentalism is, a form of entertainment – is always to entertain. If you bore people, they don't want to see you perform again.

A good performance can transport people from where they are to where you want them to be. If you can distract people during your performance, even for a few moments, from the stress that life puts on their shoulders every day, you're doing something right, I feel.



Ask yourself what you want to get from a show, how you want to feel, and then make that happen for other people.

Performing for others

The old axiom that it's better to give than to receive is certainly a truism in mentalism. Believe it or not, your audience members don't really care about you per se (unless, of course, you have a personal relationship with them). They don't care about the politics of mentalism or what techniques and equipment you use to create amazing effects. They don't care if you've won awards or been kicked off a magic forum on the Internet – they're at your show for themselves.

Marketing specialists and salespeople know that their jobs are all about the people they're selling to. That's why when people write marketing or sales copy, the rule is to use the word 'you' ten times more than you use the word 'I' or 'me' (the 'what have you done for me lately' syndrome). People are selfish, and that's perfectly acceptable.



People want to be moved. They want to be taken somewhere else. They want to have fun and enjoy themselves. So be the messenger and give it to them. Be the instrument that changes their days and puts a smile on their faces. Being allowed into other people's lives to do that is a great gift. Treat that opportunity, and the people you perform for, with the respect they deserve.

Getting a fresh set of eyes

No, you don't need to endure an unpleasant eye transplant operation. What you do need is someone who can give you honest feedback; someone who

understands your ambitions and refuses to pull any punches. Get them to stand in the corner and look for ways to improve how you perform. No matter how clever or experienced you are as a performer, having a fresh set of eyes watching you is always useful. The more you perform, the less you're able to criticise your own performance. You get used to seeing you, so you're not going to catch mistakes that you might previously have spotted.

You may not realise it, but you get used to seeing *you* doing the stuff you do. Like writing this book. I love to write, and I fancy myself pretty good at it, but without an editor you'd doubtless be spotting spelling and grammatical errors. As hard as it is watching someone tear apart your writing, having editors who can get involved, find the mistakes, offer constructive criticism and help you produce the very best book you can is vital. You need that kind of advice and constructive criticism to be the very best *you* that you can be, too.

Viewing how you perform from the perspective of the audience is incredibly difficult by yourself. It's hard to step back and critique something you happen to like. But the show isn't about what you like; it's about what the audience likes. Choose to view criticism that way and accept that it's necessary.



Invite a few trusted friends to critique you, and most importantly, don't be too proud to listen to what they have to say.

Finding a mentor to help you improve

One of the best things you can do to improve your performance is find a friend who knows more than you do about mentalism and, more importantly, acting and performance production. Check out magic clubs and circles, conferences and magic shops to find like-minded people. Try to get to know some more experienced people than you. Use your head, though. Stay away from politics. Find true friends by seeking out people you connect with and have other interests in common with outside of mentalism. I deliberately sought out people who had written books on magic and mentalism not only because I knew they took the subject seriously but also, and more importantly, they were clearly willing to share what they knew with others. Find people who are where you want to be in life and learn from them if you can. Nothing can replace someone who knows you, your art and how to improve it. Your trusted friend can also sit in the audience and evaluate how things go; they can walk around during the intermission and listen to what people say. The things your mentor picks up can be invaluable in improving your impact as a mentalist.

Recording your performances

Watching a videotape of a performance from a few years ago, I spotted that I'd made a joke that raised a big laugh. I hadn't really noticed at the time and subsequently forgot that gag. I swiftly added that line to my act, tried it out again and got the same reaction. Needless to say, it's now a staple.

Videorecording and analysing your shows can definitely help you improve your performance. As a by-product, you can also use the footage for your demo reel.

Videotaping yourself and discovering more

Filming yourself performing, even if just for the camera, is another means of assessing your act. Cameras don't lie. They can't be misled and you can't trick them. If you mess up, they'll catch you. And they're deadly honest about it.



Lots of sportspeople watch themselves – and their opponents – to find weaknesses, catch mistakes and identify ways to improve. Follow their lead and apply the techniques to your performances. Don't just record yourself once in a while – do it whenever you can.

Challenging yourself to grow

I've practised martial arts my whole life. When I started out in one style, I was a white belt. I had to achieve benchmarks and milestones and each new level required me to discover something new and to step up to perform it successfully. When I finally earned my black belt, I realised that I was still barely touching the surface of the discipline, and so I started another style – again at the bottom, as a white belt.

Like the martial arts, you can follow many different disciplines and go in various directions. Lots of techniques, tools, concepts and philosophies exist for you to study and assimilate. For example, if you want to be able to identify cards, you need to work out which technique to use. Will you control the card and peek it? If so, you need to learn card handling. Alternatively, you may want to learn visual marking techniques so you don't have to do anything but read the back of a card. Find a performer who specialises in the technique you want to learn and study them. You can set your own benchmarks and become a black belt in mentalism through diligent study and practice.



The more you challenge yourself, the better you become.

Modelling yourself on the experts

Look up. Raise your eyes and set them on the stars. No, not the bright constellations shining in the heavens, but the entertainers who're doing exactly what you want to do.

The world of mentalism consists of:

- ✓ **Full-time professionals:** Very few people are at the upper levels – the full-time pros pulling in high-level incomes and enjoying the success that comes through hard work, dedication and sheer force of will.

A slightly larger group of mentalists also fall into the 'full-time' pros category, but they're not in the same league. In fact, I know many full-timers who can barely afford to live in a caravan – so don't be fooled about your likely earnings as a mentalist.

- ✓ **Advanced amateurs:** These people perform because they want to. They may aspire to be pros, but they probably have a real life and a real job that prevents the transition. Quite frankly, that's probably a good thing.

- ✓ **Hobbyists and consumers:** This group is by far the largest, most varied and often most vocal and opinionated in the mentalist community. You find these people at the clubs, standing around in the magic shops or online doling out advice on discussion forums.

If you want to be successful, ask the people at the very top for advice. I avoid the plethora of experts online because if they're so busy posting they're not out there performing.

Being an ambassador

Good mentalism raises the bar for everyone; bad mentalism hurts the market. If you're crass, arrogant and haughty – people will be turned off by your performance. If you're rude to the audience or talk down to people, you're unlikely to be asked back.

Likewise, if you don't practise and you accidentally reveal the methods behind the tricks you perform, you hurt all of us who might perform similar effects. Because far fewer mentalists and magicians than musicians exist, it only takes a couple of bad performers to give the terms 'mentalist' and 'magician' a bad name. Don't be one of those performers. Maximise your impact by doing the best you possibly can each and every time you perform. The

mediocre and inferior mentalist hurts all mentalists. Don't let yourself fall into that category; set the bar high for all mentalists.

Giving yourself permission to succeed

The best advice I was ever given came from an older, more experienced man who had already accomplished much in his life that I wanted in my own. He told me that I'd always be my biggest competition and my own worst enemy: not the person down the street or in the magic club or online (you know, the one who's always picking a fight from behind the relative security of their computer).

My friend told me that when I was willing to focus on my life and my goals, and to start working toward producing the outcomes I wanted, then everything would start to happen for me. He told me to ignore all the naysayers and negative people who didn't believe in me and to give myself permission to succeed. He was right.



To be successful, don't worry about what other people think, say or do. Put them in your rear-view mirror and move forward toward what you want in life. Don't get involved in anything that distracts you from your goals.

My friend also told me that no matter how close you get to those goals – no matter how successful you become – never, ever forget that you're not as good as you can be. That's so true.

Chapter 3

Maximising Impact with Minimal Effort

In This Chapter

- ▶ Using maths to create magic
- ▶ Displaying extraordinary feats of memory
- ▶ Predicting people's choices

In essence, the world of mentalism is made up of three types of tricks (read the following in a decidedly broad Scots brogue): 'wee, not so wee and *huge!*' This chapter is all about creating huge effects with minimal effort.

Everyone loves the chance to get something for (almost) nothing, which is what makes this chapter so great: all the illusions work automatically. All you have to do is read, rehearse and perform with a little pizzazz to amaze your audience with your extraordinary memory or ability to foresee the future.

Numbering Maths among Your Mentalist Skills

I've never been very good at mathematics, but now that I know how to do *maths magic* I can look a lot smarter than I really am. I'm sure that you're already incredibly clever (after all, you bought this book!), but with a little practice you too can look even smarter.

Working with the magic square

The *magic square* is at least 2,500 years old. This illusion is incredibly easy and is made up of 4 rows and 4 columns, which create 16 boxes.

The Effect: You present a blank grid to an audience. Twelve of the boxes are filled in and stay the same (you memorise these ones). Four more boxes are marked A, B, C and D and it's your task to calculate these ones. You ask your audience for a random number and fill in the remaining boxes so that, however added up, numbers in the boxes always total that random number.

The Secret: What makes this trick so easy is that box A becomes your reference for box B, and then B for C and C for D (check out Figure 3-1 for the details).

Figure 3-1:
The magic
number
square.

11	14	5	A
4	B	10	15
C	7	12	9
13	8	D	6

Despite its longevity, the magic square still amazes people. I'm a big fan of this trick and keep cards in my wallet so I can perform it at any time for people in a close up setting.

- 1. Ask an audience member to choose a number between 30 and 100; anything below or above that range doesn't work.**
- 2. Subtract 30 from the number chosen in Step 1.**

Assume that the person picks 40. I call that number the *variable*. Subtract 30 from the variable and you get 10. That result goes in box A.

- 3. Add 1 to each box.**

Add 1 to box A, which gives you 11. Put that in box B. Then, add 1 to that, and put 12 in box C. For box D, add 1 to C and you get 13. The maths are $A = 40 - 30 = 10$. $B = A + 1$, which is 11. $C = B + 1 = 12$. $D = C + 1 = 13$. Whatever number the audience member gives you, just follow the maths (see Figure 3-2).

Figure 3-2:
The magic
number
square
completed.

11	14	5	10 ^A
4	11 ^B	10	15
12 ^C	7	12	9
13	8	13 ^D	6

4. Total the numbers.

Add up the numbers in each row, using a calculator or pen and paper. The total for each row is the same as the number you were given – a number freely chosen by a volunteer. This trick works if you add up the numbers from right to left, top to bottom, diagonally, the four corner boxes and even if you pick the larger squares (each composed of four individual boxes).

Predicting a random number: The rule of nine

Predictions are a staple of mentalism and audiences love them. Use this trick to make you appear to have miraculous powers of prediction.

The Effect: After being given some random numbers, you turn over a piece of card to show that you accurately predicted the total.

The Secret: The number 9 has always held significance to ancient cultures, in part because it's often at the centre of some rather strange and perplexing mathematical problems. Such is the case here; the effect is entirely based on maths and works automatically.

What you need: A piece of paper, a pen, a calculator and a blank 3 x 5" index card.

To perform this trick, follow these steps:

1. Obtain the initial number and do your prediction.

Give a volunteer the sheet of paper and pen, and ask him to write the numbers 1 to 5 down the left-hand margin. Then ask him to write a random four-digit number next to the number 1. Seeing this number, you pick up the index card and write down your secret prediction. Fold the card up and put it on the table.

Here's how you get the prediction. Whatever four-digit number the volunteer writes, say 4256, you add the number 2 to the first digit and subtract the number 2 from the last digit. In this case, 4256 becomes 6254.

2. Ask a second person to pick a number.

Slide the paper over to a second volunteer, and ask him to write down next to the 2 any three-digit number that comes to mind. On line 3, you then write down a three-digit number that, when added to his number, equals 999. For example, if he writes down 255 on the second line, you write 744 on the third line.



3. Ask a third person to pick a number.

Ask the third volunteer to write a number on line 4, and on line 5 you write a three-digit number that, when added to the three-digit number on line 4, equals 999. So, if the person writes 645, you write down 354 on line 5.

4. Calculate and reveal.

Ask an audience volunteer who's good at maths to add up all the numbers in lines 1 to 5 and write the total at the bottom. Now, turn over your prediction to reveal that your number matches that total. Pretty amazing!

Getting an audience to think the same odd thing: An elephant in Denmark

People are predictable. They think alike based on their culture and upbringing. This trick is great with a large crowd. Try it out!

The Effect: You make an entire room of people think the same thing.

The Secret: The effect is based purely on mathematics and a clever use of numbers to induce people to think of certain things.

Follow these steps to perform this trick:

1. Set the stage.

This trick works best with a large room of people, but can be performed with small groups as well. Ask everyone to try an experiment with you. Then explain that they must do it in their head without sharing their thoughts with anyone else. Larger crowds ensure you receive lots of the same answer.

Get the audience to think of a small number, perhaps something under 10 to make doing the mental maths easy. Then ask them to double the number. Next, get them to add 8 to that number and divide the total so far by the number 2. Whatever that total is, tell them to subtract their first number from it.

2. Work the magic with numbers.

This part takes a few seconds to figure out, but is pretty easy. Whatever number they now have in mind, ask the audience to convert it to the corresponding letter in the alphabet. Given that 26 letters form the alphabet, A equals 1, B equals 2 and so on.

Ask the audience to think of a country that starts with the letter they arrive at. Then get them to think of an animal that begins with the



second letter of the country's name. Say, 'Nothing crazy . . . just the most logical and common one that comes to mind.' Whatever that animal is, ask them to see the colour of that animal in their mind. They should all be thinking of the same animal. Occasionally some people will think of other countries and animals – don't worry! That's perfectly normal and is why you want a larger group, because you're more likely to get a decent number of people getting it right.



3. Reveal the results.

To create some tension, take a breath and look at everyone for a second. Don't rush. I like to pause for a bit longer than feels comfortable to prompt a few people in the audience to start nervously giggling.

Finally say, 'Well, this is pretty strange. There's no way so many people could be so wrong. The last time I was in Denmark, there were no grey elephants anywhere!'

Counting coins: Martin Gardner's Delight

Martin Gardner loved both magic tricks and maths. In fact, he was known world-wide for writing books on both subjects. He showed me the basic workings of this nifty little trick some years ago. I call it Martin Gardner's Delight because he enjoyed it so much.

The Effect: You place three different coins in front of one volunteer and out loud assign the numbers 1, 2 and 3 to them: the coin on the volunteer's left is 1, the middle coin is 2 and the coin on his right is 3. You turn around to face the other way and then instruct the volunteer to select and concentrate on one of the coins only. Next, get him to switch the position of the two remaining coins, once. Then ask him to swap the position of any two coins as many times as he likes, but to call out the swap each time. For instance, if he transposes the positions of coins 1 and 3, he says, '1, 3' to indicate that exchange. He changes the coins around several times. Without asking any questions, you identify the coin he was initially thinking of.

The Secret: To perform this trick you need to be all fingers and thumbs, but in a good way! You keep track of the items while your back is turned by following the switches with your fingers and thumb.

To perform Martin Gardner's Delight, follow these steps:

1. Explaining the process.

Before you begin, demonstrate to your volunteer exactly what you expect from him – or things don't go as planned. Show him how to use both hands to swap items. For example, to swap coins 1 and 3, he must cross his arms and pick up the coin at position 1 (to his left) with the

right hand and the coin at position 3 (to his right) with his left hand, swap them and then call out '1, 3'.

2. Turning your back.



As you're turning around, look to see what coin is in position 1. You need to remember it to perform the trick. To keep track from this point, touch your index finger to your thumb – this represents position 1.

3. Choosing and moving the coins.

Instruct the volunteer to choose one coin and focus on it. Then, ask him to swap the other two coins without saying a word and to tell you when he's done so. Get him to continue swapping two coins at a time, calling the transpositions out as he does so.



Follow the position of the chosen coin with your fingers. Assuming your first finger is on your thumb tip, if he says '1, 2' you touch your ring middle finger to your thumb to indicate the coin is at position 2.

Don't switch your finger position again *unless* the person calls out a position that includes the finger on which you have your thumb at that moment. In this case, your middle finger (position 2) is on your thumb. If he calls out '1, 3', you do nothing. If he calls out '2, 3', you swap your middle finger for your ring finger (position 3).

4. Keeping up with the changes.

Continue to follow the switches until the volunteer tells you that he's finished and stops. Whatever finger is on your thumb is the position of the coin he's been thinking of. Turn around, look at the three coins and immediately identify the coin that corresponds to the position!

Enhancing Your Memory Skills

Audiences love geniuses. The tricks in this section make you appear a true savant with an incredible memory.

Calling it out: The colossal number

Can you imagine being able to remember scores of numbers randomly called out to you by an audience, and then, easily recalling them and writing them down in the order in which they were given to you? You can pretend to be able to do just that with this trick.

The Effect: Ask people to start calling out random numbers. Write them down in sequence on a large piece of paper resting on an easel. You end up with a very long number! Now turn to the audience and tell them to give you only 10 seconds to memorise the number. Someone times you while you face the board. When the time's up, turn the board away from the audience. Ignore the board and carry on with the rest of your act. Finally, when your act is nearly finished, ask someone to turn the board around so that it faces the audience but you can't see it. Now recite the entire number.

The Secret: The numbers called out aren't necessarily the ones you write down on the board. In fact, you write down numbers you've already memorised, such as digits from your phone number, various friends' phone numbers, your national insurance number and so on. Put together as many numbers as you think you can remember.

This trick is really simple and yet audiences absolutely love it.



This illusion works by getting the entire audience involved in calling out numbers. The more people who are involved, all yelling simultaneously, the better. That way, nobody in the audience really thinks about what's being said or what you're choosing to write down. Every time I perform this trick, people gasp at the amazing power of my 'memory'.

Demonstrating total recall

This trick involves pretending to memorise an entire deck of cards in lightening time and then recalling their order.

The Effect: You memorise the order of a deck of cards in under 30 seconds and recall their order to a stunned group of people.

The Secret: You cheat! The deck is organised in a sequence that you've memorised in advance, making the trick easy to perform but incredible to behold.

Follow these steps:

- 1. Remove the jokers from the deck.**
- 2. Separate the suits into four piles. Arrange each suit in order from ace to king, faces up.**

Reconstruct the deck in the following order: clubs, hearts, spades and diamonds (CHaSeD for short – see Chapter 5). So, pick up the clubs pile and drop it on the spades pile, the spades on the hearts pile, and finally all the cards on top of the diamonds pile.

3. Cut about 3 mm (1/8 of an inch) off of the end of one of the jokers.

Using scissors is fine but a special paper cutter (available from any stationery shop) gives you a cleaner line. Discard the second joker.

4. Deal the deck in the following order:

- With the entire deck in your hand face up, deal the clubs into two new face-up piles: first one card, and then two cards and then three cards – from left to right and back. The result looks as follows: ace (left pile), 2 and 3 (right pile), 4, 5 and 6 (on left pile), 7 (on right pile), 8 and 9 (on left pile), 10, jack, queen (on right pile) and king (on left pile).
- Continue with the hearts, which start on the right with two cards. Ace and 2 (right pile), 3, 4 and 5 (left pile); now you go back to one card, the 6 (right pile), and then 7 and 8 (left pile), 9, 10 and jack (right pile), queen (left pile) and finally the king (right pile).
- Carry on with the spades, starting on the left pile with three cards. Deal off the ace, 2 and 3 (left pile), 4 (right pile), 5 and 6 (left pile), 7, 8 and 9 (right pile), 10 (left pile), jack and queen (right pile) and finally the king (left pile).
- Start off the diamonds on the right pile with four cards. Deal off with the ace, 2, 3 and 4 (right pile), 5 (left pile), 6 and 7 (right pile), 8, 9 and 10 (left pile), jack (right pile) and finally the queen and king (left pile).



You now have two piles of cards in front of you. These two sets of 26 cards must stay in the same set. Never mix the two sets of 26 cards together or the order is lost and you can't use the sequence as designed.

5. Place the short joker card on top of the left pile and put the right pile on top of the joker card to form an entire deck of 53 cards.

6. Put the deck in the box and write 'TR' on the bottom of the box in pen so you can always identify it.

I call this the 'total recall deck' because you can use it to pretend you have just that. This deck is now ready to use, so start memorising it.

I memorised the deck like this. I 'see' each of the suits, on each side, as representing the phone number of a friend. Because each side alternates between six and seven cards in a given suit, per side, using the telephone number concept is easy. Visualising the way the deck is ordered in its two different sets is really helpful. See the layout shown in Table 3-1 and count the cards.

Table 3-1

Pre-arranged Layout of the Total Recall Deck

	<i>Left Pile</i>	<i>Right Pile</i>
Clubs	Ace (1)	2, 3
	4, 5, 6	7
	8, 9	10, J, Q
	K	—
Hearts	—	Ace (1), 2
	3, 4, 5	6
	7, 8	9, 10, J
	Q	K
Spades	A (1), 2, 3	4
	5, 6	7, 8, 9
	10	J, Q
	K	—
Diamonds	—	A (1), 2, 3, 4
	5	6, 7
	8, 9, 10	J
	Q, K	Joker

As soon as you've organised and memorised your deck, you're ready to share your trick with an audience. Follow these steps:

1. Address your audience.

Say, 'Hello ladies and gentleman. I'd like to show you a little demonstration. I'm going to take a deck of playing cards and attempt to memorise their order in less than 30 seconds by using mnemonics and visual association techniques taught to me by memory masters.'

2. Pull the deck out of the box, cut about a third off the top, and hand that third to someone on your far left.

3. Cut to the short joker card and hand out the remainder of that top stack to someone sitting near the person with the first third, still on your left; cut another half off and hand it to someone on your right, and then give the remainder to someone on your far right.

The four audience members can shuffle the cards as they like. Instruct the two people on your left to put their decks together and hand them to you. Do the same with the two people on your right. When you have the entire deck, you still have two different sets of cards, one in the upper top and one in the upper bottom. The order doesn't matter.

4. Shuffle the deck falsely.

Bring the two halves together and false-shuffle them. To anyone watching, you can't get fairer than that. The *Hindu shuffle* is easiest. Simply hold the deck face down with your right thumb on the inner side and your ring finger and right middle finger on the outside. With your left hand, grab the end of the deck from the bottom and pull the rest of the deck outward towards you; doing so removes a small set of 10 to 15 cards. (YouTube has lots of videos of the Hindu shuffle.) So, maintain a break with your fingers and take the top half and perform a Hindu shuffle until you reach the break. Then, turn the deck over and Hindu shuffle the bottom deck.

5. Find the marker cards.

Look at the audience and say, 'I'm going to thumb through these cards now and try to memorise what I see. Can someone time me, please?' When someone is ready to count the seconds, instruct him to start and begin thumbing through all the cards.



Everyone in the audience thinks you're 'memorising the deck', but in fact you're counting off half of the deck while looking for the joker and looking for which half of the deck holds the black aces by visually seeing them, or by deducing their location through a process of elimination, as follows.

If you count off 26 cards and you don't see the joker, stop and split the deck in two. If you do see the joker, count one more card for a total of 27, and split the deck at that point.

When you get to that point say, 'Stop! How many seconds was that?' I doubt it takes you more than 20 seconds. Whatever the volunteer calls out say, 'That's not bad.'

6. Turn to someone in the audience on your far left and hand that person the half of the deck with the black aces, just like when you stacked the deck, and pass the other half of the deck (with the red aces) to someone on your right.



The faster you can perform this trick, the better it looks and the more impressed people are. Presenting it as a 'memory demonstration' also adds more credibility to other tricks that may seem 'too impossible' during your act.

7. Ask the two people holding the separate halves to stand on your left and right, respectively, but not too close – you want to be standing centre stage when you perform this part.
8. Address the audience and the two volunteers, saying, 'I actually only looked through one half of the deck (turning to the person on your left) – yours. By a process of elimination, because I know what's in that deck (turn toward the person on your right), I also know what's in yours.'
9. Take a deep breath for effect and shake your body out as though you're relaxing.
10. Address the volunteers and say, 'Okay, are you ready? Look through your half of the deck and let's start with the clubs. When I call out a card you're holding, just drop it on the floor so that everyone can see I was correct. Here we go.'

When you're ready, recite the order of the cards. You know what's in each half of the deck on your left and right.

Anticipating the Future: The Destiny of Choice

Even though humans may appear to have free will, the tricks in this section allow you to predict the choices people make in almost real time, simply by using clever techniques and carefully crafted patter.

Dealing in destiny

The Effect: You bring out a deck of cards and ask a female from the audience to choose a card that you intend to use to identify. She selects a queen, and so you remove the other queens from the deck and put the remainder of the deck aside. The person mixes the four queens a number of times out of your view and is left with just one card. You're able to tell her, without looking, what the card is and then use it to give her a 'reading'.

The Secret: You accomplish this *dealing destiny* illusion by using odd or even spelling, coupled with specific patter to assure a numerical outcome.

Here's how to wow your audience:

1. Force the set of cards.

Before you're in front of an audience, remove any queen you like and thoroughly shuffle the deck. Return the queen to the top of the deck.





Start your performance and force the queen onto the volunteer using a method of your choice (I describe various card-forcing methods in Chapter 5).

You can perform this trick with any four cards, so long as the suits are different; you must have a heart, diamond, club and spade represented in the final four-card set that the volunteer uses.

Never force the club, because it's the one they're eventually left with.

I present this trick as a quasi-reading opportunity, and so force the initial card to break up any continuity from the start and suggest that everything is random and therefore being guided by destiny.

2. Remove the rest of the set.

Ask the volunteer to remove and keep hold of the remaining three queens and put the rest of the deck to the side; you don't need it.

3. Ask your volunteer to choose red or black.

If she chooses red, say, 'Okay, then we'll start with a red card. Go ahead and put a red card, the heart or diamond, face up on top of the other cards, then a black one, then a red again, and finally a black. But don't let me see the order. Keep the cards facing you.' If she says black, use your magician's force (Chapter 5 shows you how to invoke this) and say, 'Great, we'll use the black cards as support cards to stand behind love and wealth, which are the hearts and diamonds.'

Instruct her to place the cards out, alternately, as above. Finally, tell her she can leave the current order, or cut to the other red card, but that she needs to make sure the order alternates.

Some mentalists suggest that you don't need to overcomplicate an effect, and in general, I agree with the concept – but I also want things to appear as random and disconnected as possible and so I add the extra steps coming next. People aren't stupid and you don't want them to connect the dots and work out what you're doing.

4. Eliminate the cards.

This part can be a little confusing for your volunteer, so demonstrate what you're asking her to do, using another four cards, at least once to make sure that she understands the counting sequence she'll follow based on the suits.

Say, 'You should now have a face-up red card, then a face-up black one, then a red and then the last black card. Whatever card is now on the face that you can see – the heart or diamond – I want you to spell out its name. As you do so, I want you to move the face card to the back each time you spell out a letter of that suit.'

Continue, 'For example, if you have a heart, spell it H-E-A-R-T-S, and move the heart to the back for the "H", then the next card (the black one) to the back for the "E" and so on. Follow the same process for a diamond: D-I-A-M-O-N-D-S. Each card must be spelled out completely and include an "S" on the end.'

Instruct her to do that now. When she has done so, say 'Great. Whatever card is now on the face, take it out and place it face down on the table so I can't see it.' She does. Tell her, 'So far, so good. You have another card face up, either black or red, and I want you to start spelling again. If it's a spade, spell S-P-A-D-E-S and move one card per letter from the face to the back.'

Get your volunteer to repeat these steps until she's left with a single card.

5. Reveal the card.

Presuming your volunteer has followed your directions correctly, the remaining card is the queen of clubs. Say, 'Let me recap on what's taken place; you've just experienced a series of events based on choice, chance or fate. Whatever happened, happened – or did it?'

Put on your actor's hat and ham it up with a nice reading (I describe readings in Chapter 13). Try to tailor your patter to the volunteer.

Continue with something like, 'The card I'm sensing has to do with ambition, initiative, drive and desire. Perhaps risk, but not a bad risk – just the ability to take one when required. I'm feeling leadership and infectious energy. This is definitely a stave; you have the queen of clubs!'



The more you discover about the art of cold reading and broad generic statements, the more you can offer your audience. I script this trick for a female and so use a queen, but if you're performing for a male, just force a card you feel suits his personality, perhaps the king or jack. Alternatively, you can research the various meanings of cards used for tarot reading and create an act using them.

Spelling things out: The dictionary word test

The Effect: Present two books to a volunteer and ask him to choose one. He picks a dictionary containing thousands of words. You then riffle through the pages and stop when the volunteer tells you to. After the volunteer notes and remembers the first word on the left page, you close the book. You then 'read the person's mind' and reveal the word he's been secretly thinking about.



The Secret: The first defined word on every left-hand page is written in pencil on the top right of the facing right-hand page. You secretly peek at it.

What you need: An inexpensive paperback dictionary, a very fine mechanical pencil and an hour or so in front of the television.

To get ready to perform this trick follow these two steps:

1. Prepare the book.

I create commercial books very similar to this one, but here's how to make your own. Open the dictionary and look at the first defined word on the left-hand page. Normally, it's in bold and has the definition(s) after it. In terms of placement, the word may be a bit down from the top. On the right top corner of the opposite page, write that word down. Repeat this process for every page, until you've gone through the whole book.

2. Practise your riffing.

Before performing in front of an audience, you need to make sure that you can hold, handle and riffle the book in a particular way; practise the following until you're confident:

- Hold the book with the cover facing you and your left hand gripping the upper part of the spine: it needs to be completely vertical and perpendicular to your body. Your thumb is on the front cover under the title; your fingers are on the back. Your grip comes from your thumb and two first fingers.
- Start with the top of the book positioned at 12:00 and the bottom at 6:00 and then gently rotate it on its horizontal axis counter-clockwise, until the end of the title is pointing at approximately 1:30 to 2:00. The cover is still facing you, if it's not – you're not holding it aright!
- Grip the right top corner of the book with your right hand, between your thumb and two forefingers. To riffle, keep your left hand firmly in position to create a fulcrum and with your right hand bend the book back towards you. Gently and slowly release the pages with your right thumb, allowing them to spring forward in a cascade. Practise stopping the cascade at different points in the book. Don't rush this part.
- When you stop, slide your left hand off the spine and down the cover to the hanging right-hand side of the book. Grip with your thumb near the peek word on the right-hand side.

Now wow an audience by following these steps:

1. **Pick someone in the audience to help you and say, 'Can you help me out with something? I have a couple of books here – just point to one.'**

Either have two prepared books ready or use the magician's force (as I describe in Chapter 5) to make sure that you use the dictionary. Continue with, 'Okay, this dictionary has 80,000 words in it. I'd like you to pick one.' As you say that, make sure your volunteer is on your right side (move if necessary) and riffle through the pages from the front to the back so that all the left-hand side pages cascade away from you both; this way the volunteer can see all the words as they pass by.

2. **Turn back toward him and say, 'I'd like you to tell me when to stop as I riffle through these pages.'**

Slowly riffle through the book when he says stop, do so. If you like, ask your volunteer whether he wants to change his mind by going on a few more pages (thus emphasising his free choice). If he does, riffle through some more pages until he's happy.

3. **Say to your volunteer, 'I'd like you to focus on the first defined word right here.'**



Here's a subtle technique to draw your participant's attention to the word while you peek at the opposite page: tap your index finger noticeably in that general area at the same time as you tell him to look there. While you're tapping on that page, supposedly for the benefit of your volunteer, you can quickly peek at the word you've written on the facing page. As soon as you've done so, immediately turn your body away from him and say, 'I don't want to see anything, so quickly take a look at the first defined word you see but don't say it out loud – it's normally in bold. See it? Great.'



Make the peek as fast and inconspicuous as possible.

4. **As soon as he says he's seen the word, snap the book shut and put it down. Say, 'I don't even want to touch it.' This subtle detail is designed to create a false memory (check out Chapter 1 for more on these) so that later your volunteer may in fact think you never touched the book.**

This routine happens in just a matter of seconds; do it very fast and very clean. The hard work's done; the rest is presentation.

5. **Say, 'That's pretty fair, don't you agree? You chose the page and had the chance to change your mind. You had me stop and then read a word. Is that word still in your mind?'**

He says yes (I hope, otherwise you have to do the whole thing again!).

6. Close your eyes and take a deep breath; tell him to focus and to try to send you the word in his mind – but not to say a thing out loud.

7. Tell him you're having trouble.

Say, 'Let's start with something smaller, perhaps a letter. Just relax your mind and send me your thoughts.' Tell him to think of the shape of each individual letter.

8. Say that you're seeing one letter, and then the next, and about half way through announce with a flourish what the word is.



Every mentalist routine includes the actual effect (the magic), the patter (story line) and the presentation (how you portray it through your own personality). Although I give you the techniques in this chapter, and throughout this book, try to inject your own personality into every routine and to develop your own patter.

Chapter 4

Making Magic with Money

In This Chapter

- ▶ Performing with loose change
 - ▶ Dealing with paper dosh
 - ▶ Gambling to win big
-

Mentalists love to use everyday objects for their tricks, and because people usually carry money in their pockets, using coins and banknotes works really well. The illusions I describe in this chapter are some of the easiest you can do with common objects. But don't be fooled: they stun audiences each and every time.

Cashing In with Copper and Silver Capers

In this section, I explain two great tricks that you can perform with coins.

Putting in your two-and-a-half cents

The original idea for the two-and-a-half cents trick came from Art Emerson and was published in the 1970s by Sam Dalal in his magic monthly, *Mantra* (see the later 'The two-and-a-half cents backstory' sidebar for more on the trick's history). It was taught to me by Martin Gardner.

The Effect: After pulling some change from your pocket, you hand it to someone to hold in her closed fist. You ask her to pick any two-digit number she likes, and after a few basic exercises, she opens her hand to find that you predicted the exact amount of change she held in advance.

The Secret: This effect is nearly entirely self-working. Because finding a half-pence piece is nearly impossible these days, you're going to cheat and cut a penny in half using shears before the performance.



What you need: Three pennies and a pair of sheet metal shears or tin snips, which you can buy at any DIY store.

Before the performance, you need to cut a penny in half by following these steps:

1. **Place a penny one-third deep into a table vice or hold it with a set of vice grips.**

Be careful not to mar the penny.

2. **Cut half of the penny off.**

If the penny bends, drop it down in the table vice and crush it flat. If you're using vice grips, find a hammer and gently pound it flat on concrete.

3. **File or sand down any sharp edges to make sure that nobody gets cut during your performance.**

You've probably noticed that this trick is named after the American colloquialism, 'that's just my two cents' (the British equivalent is something like 'that's my tuppence worth'), which often follows a conversation in which you've shared your own views related to a given topic. The patter below plays with that expression quite well.

I love using this trick when I'm having a conversation and someone's being a tad argumentative. Be on the lookout for hot topics of interest such as politics, money and religion. I frequently pull out the following little gem whenever someone's being impolite, and I want to gear the conversation back toward something more positive.

Follow these steps:

1. **Say, 'Hold on just a second . . . let me show you something. I realise you may not support my views on [insert the hot topic of the day], but I think someone of your intelligence will appreciate this.'**
2. **Rummage around in your pocket and pull out the two pennies and half-penny, but don't let the person see the half-penny.**
3. **Ask her to open her hand; place the coins there and tell her to close her fist.**
4. **Say, 'Okay, this'll let me demonstrate the root of what I think. Keep your hand closed and don't look at the coins yet.'**

Ask the person whether she's any good at maths. If she says 'yes', let her do the sums in her head. If not, let her use the calculator on her mobile phone. You can always supply your phone if she doesn't have one or do the maths yourself, if you prefer.

- 5. Instruct the person to think of any two-digit number that she can easily work with.**

When she has a number in mind, ask her to add the next number above it. For instance, if she selects 10, she adds 11 to it, which arrives at 21.

- 6. Tell her to add an additional 9 to that number.**

In this case, the new total is 30.

- 7. Get her to divide that number by two, bringing it to 15.**

- 8. Instruct her to subtract the original number she chose, in this case 10, from this new number, giving a total of 5, and then divide that number by 2 again, which gives 2.5 as a grand total.**

When you arrive at 2.5 (the maths ensures the result is always 2.5), turn the conversation back to the earlier hot topic by saying, 'My last point regarding our previous debate is actually very simple: I respect your right to believe as you choose, and your right to disagree with me. I believe what I believe, and what I shared with you was just my two-and-a-half-cents worth.'

At this point, I've actually had people correct me and say, 'it's two cents'. Hopefully, you get that useful help too as you instruct the person to open her hand.

The two-and-a-half cents backstory

Every time I perform this trick, people's jaws hit the floor. It breaks the conversation moves us in a more productive and enjoyable direction. I came up with this presentation when Richard Dawkins, one of the best known and outspoken proponents of atheism today, visited my mentor Martin Gardner, a respected magician, at his home. Martin was a sceptic's sceptic and world famous for his work as a writer in the area.

After Dawkins left, we had an interesting conversation about atheists. Apparently, Dawkins had been shocked to hear that Martin wasn't an atheist, but rather, a philosophical theist. That is, he believed a Creator existed, but he

wasn't sure who or what it was. Martin said that anyone who is a really rational person, and didn't have an emotional agenda, couldn't possibly question the reality that humans were engineered. The resulting discussion was the catalyst for the two-and-a-half cents routine.

That discussion with Dawkins, led me to wonder whether a 'magic' way existed to convey to someone whose beliefs were the polar opposite of mine, that I'm entitled to my own views, just as they are to theirs – and that I was just sharing my two cents' worth. I told Martin about the idea and he taught me this trick to encompass it.

Predicting what's in a person's pocket

The Effect: You make multiple predictions about the types and dates of coins that people have in their pockets. All your predictions prove to be correct.

The Secret: You employ a special 'coin gimmick' and the one-ahead principle.

What you need: Some random coins; another 6-10 identical coins that will be used to force a known coin value and date; some glue; a small blank notepad that appears the same on both sides; and a pen.

To make the coin gimmick, follow these steps:

1. Place the random coins on a table and stack them a bit so they resemble the example in Figure 4-1.
2. Put a dab of glue under the coins on top of the bottom coins so they stick together.
3. Allow them to dry completely and then flip them over.
4. Put a few more coins over the gaps and glue them down, too.

When dry, the coin gimmick is ready to use.



Figure 4-1:
Making
the coin
gimmick.

During a show you ask people whether they have some coins in their pockets; you need to work with two or three people at the very least. You can perform this trick on stage, in a room or even on the street. Here's how it works:

1. **Place a handful of force coins, the coin gimmick, the notepad and a pen in your jacket pockets.**
2. **Pull out the notepad and flash both sides to show that it's completely blank.**
3. **Hand the notepad to the first person, along with the pen, and say, 'Do me a favour and sign your name at the top of the paper.'**
4. **Take the notepad back and say, 'In a moment, I'm going to ask you to reach in your pocket and randomly choose a coin.'**

Covertly flip the pad over in your hand so that you have the blank side facing up.

5. **Write a 'prediction' on the notepad while saying, 'All right, I'm going to predict what you're going to pick before you do it.'**
6. **Sign your name at the top of the pad and write down the force coin's details, such as 'penny, 1976', below your name.**
Crumple it up and drop it on the table in plain sight.
7. **Ask the volunteer to reach into her pocket and pull out one of the coins.**
Get her to identify the coin. Assume that it's a 20p piece, dated 2003. Make sure that people watching hear the details and remember them.
8. **Place the notepad on a table face down so that the first person's signature can't be seen, and then instruct a second person to sign her name on the top of the pad.**

Repeat Steps 4 to 6.

9. **Ask the second person to reach into her pocket and then tell everyone the type and date of the coin she picks out.**
Assume, it's a 5p coin, dated 1999.
10. **Say, 'I also have a pocket full of coins, but that would be too easy if I just picked one. In just a second. . .'**

Pretend to be thinking. Pick up the notepad and write your signature on the top in front of everyone; then display it. Pointing to a final person, say 'I'm going to predict what you pick out of my pocket.'

Covertly flip the pad a final time and write '5p, 1999' under the second person's signature. Crumple it up and place it next to the others. Put the pad and pen in one of your pockets.



Reach into your pocket and pull out the gimmick and the force coins, and display them palm up for everyone to see. Put them back in your pocket and retain the gimmick in your hand by pressing it against your hip from within the pocket. With your other hand, reach over and pull the jacket pocket open wide enough for someone to reach in. Addressing the final person say, 'Can you just reach in there and grab a coin; I don't think it would be fair if I did it.' She does so. Then, ask her to announce the identity of the coin.

11. Reveal the predictions.

Now, the moment everyone's been waiting for. Scoop up all the papers you previously balled up in one hand and ask someone to help you out. Hand them over to that person and say, 'Okay, take these and open them all up. But don't let anyone see them. Put the slips in order and when you're ready, let me know.'

Say to the spectators, 'I want her to do it. I don't want you to think that I've somehow switched things.' Now's the perfect time to recap: 'Let me remind you what's happened. Each person signed the pad. I predicted what they would choose before they picked a coin. I crumpled up the prediction and put it in plain view. Then, they chose a coin and told everyone what it was. I repeated that process to make it as fair as possible. Correct?' When she's ready say, 'All right, read out the name of the person first and then what I predicted.' As she does so, everyone freaks out. Ask her to show everyone the papers and hand them out for inspection.

Raking In the Paper Money

Pretty much everyone carries banknotes. And I prefer doing tricks with notes because they're always worth more, and, of course, people are often emotionally attached to, and motivated by, money. In this section, I show you several tricks you can do with paper money.

Banking on winning 50 smackers

The Effect: You display five small coin envelopes to a group of people. Four contain a single slip of paper, and one contains a £50 banknote. Only you know which envelope contains what and your goal is to keep the money. The audience's goal is to get the money. Several people pick whatever envelope they want. You then encourage and discourage trades, which they have a free choice to accept or deny. When everyone's finished, each person has a single envelope. When they're all opened, you have seemingly manipulated the situation and are left holding the cash.

The Secret: This wonderful trick is known as ‘bank night’ in the magic world, and the method is so deviously simple that it’s been devastating audiences for nearly 100 years. Each envelope contains a slip of paper and no cash. When you open up your envelope, whatever it happens to contain, you covertly load it with the money in order to succeed. The trick makes you appear a master of manipulating people’s choices.

What you need: £50 banknote, five envelopes, a marker pen, a pair of scissors, five pieces of paper cut to the same size as a banknote and a thumb tip (a false thumb normally made of rubber or plastic that you can hide things in when worn on top of your thumb; also referred to as a TT in magic circles, you can buy them at any magic shop).

You need to prepare your envelopes before you pull off this trick. Follow these steps:

1. **Number the front (opposite of the flap side) of each coin envelope with 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 using a black marker pen.**
 2. **Cut five pieces of paper to the same width and length of the note, fold each piece exactly the same way and put one in each envelope.**
- Seal the envelopes.
3. **Fold up the actual banknote in the same way and stick it in the thumb tip.**

Try the tip on to make sure that it fits, and then put it away.

When the time’s right, at a party or dinner with friends, steer the conversation toward free will. Secretly put on your thumb tip secretly at this point, and follow these steps:

1. **Say, ‘Philosophers, theologians and scientists have debated the concept of free will for centuries. And nobody is any closer today to answering the question of whether or not humans have free will.’**

Continue with, ‘For instance, Descartes said that will is, by its very nature, free and can’t be constrained. Hume suggested it was a very simple matter and we can act as we like according to our desires. However, I’m not sure that we do have free will, in the strictest sense of the definition. If nothing else, I’m confident that our will can be manipulated to such a degree that we make choices in line with those desired by the manipulators themselves. Let me show you an example; I think you’ll find it interesting.’ Pull out the envelopes.

Keep the thumb tip hidden on your thumb behind the envelopes from this point forward.



2. Say, 'In one of these envelopes, conveniently numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, I've placed a £50 note. In the remaining four is a piece of paper that I've folded in such a way that you can't feel which is which. In a moment, you're going to choose one envelope. Then, I'll try to convince you to keep it or trade it. My goal is to keep the money, and your goal is to be the person who takes it. Do you understand?'

Continue, 'The problem is, it isn't that easy. I have five envelopes and there are five of us, so from the beginning there are 25 possible outcomes regarding who'll get what envelope first. For example, it may end up as: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; 1, 2, 4, 3, 5; 1, 5, 3, 2, 4; 1, 3, 4, 5, 2; and so on. Statisticians would tell you that so many variables exist that there's no possible way to be 100 per cent certain who'll do what and when. If it were left entirely to chance, there's just no way to guarantee that I get the money.'

3. Say, 'Since I want the cash as much as you do, I'm going to make you do exactly what I want you to do by using subtle body language, overt direction, questions and other interpersonal communication. You won't even realise what I'm doing and because of that, you'll have no free choice at any time whatsoever in the game. Still want to give it a try?'

Fifty quid's at stake and so they will!

4. Point to the four other people, one at a time, and instruct them to pick one envelope until each person is holding one.

Say, 'Well, that seemed fair, didn't it? I didn't do anything but point at you and ask you to take an envelope. Or was that all that happened?'

5. Smile and say, 'Actually, I already eliminated free will by choosing who picked the envelope first. That meant the other three of you had to wait, even if you wanted to go first. Then, I went to the second person and so on. Already the game isn't going how you think it should, is it? From now on, you have to follow my instructions, but I won't share with you what I'm doing or why. Here we go.'



The next part is a little tricky because I can't provide a detailed script. I have no idea what people are going to say when you try to get them to trade. To make this fun and entertaining, you have to offer them all a series of choices. For example, you can look at the person with envelope 2 and say, 'You know what, in the last 31 times I've done this, the money has always been in envelope 2. Do you want to trade it for envelope 3 or keep it?' If the person keeps it, look at the person with envelope 3 and ask her if she wants to keep that envelope or trade it for number 2. Get it? It's a game. Be creative and have fun with it. And then keep the trick going:

1. After the four people have traded a number of times against you and among themselves, finish up by focusing on yourself and just one envelope by saying, 'All right, I think that's pretty good. I'd say things are mixed up. I have envelope [whatever number it is] and you, there, have envelope 2. I told you, envelope 2 always has the cash. So I'm going to give you a chance to trade with me. You have to ask yourself, do I have the cash or do you?'

The person chooses however she wants – but her choice doesn't matter.

2. Ask the same question of all the other participants, , but don't do it in order – you want the presentation to appear to be in random order, even though it isn't.
3. Say, 'Okay, that's it, no more trades. Whatever you've got is what you get.'
4. Instruct everyone, except the person holding envelope 2, to open their envelopes and pull out the papers.

Of course, no one has the £50 note.

5. Look at the person with the number 2 envelope and say, 'Okay, I lied: one more chance. You can keep that envelope or take mine. Remember, I told you that in the last eight times, the money was in envelope 2.'

Notice that you said 31 times last time. That's deliberate; the person may notice it too and think she's caught you out.

6. Whatever the person chooses, open your envelope first.
7. Reach down into it with the thumb tip and slide out the folded £50 note.

Put the envelope with the thumb tip still in it straight into your jacket pocket. The moment you show the £50 note, everyone knows that you managed to get the right envelope after all, even though the very last person had a totally free choice. So much for free will!



Predicting a banknote serial number

The Effect: You borrow a banknote from someone and ask her to read the serial number silently to herself. You then proceed to say it out loud, digit by digit, and you're dead on.

The Secret: The method is ridiculously easy: you just switch the banknote for one you've already memorised.

Follow these steps:

1. Memorising the banknote serial number.

Use a common note, such as a £5 one. Also, use one that's moderately worn; the newer or more damaged it is, the more likely someone is to recognise that you made a change. Put the note into your pocket.

2. Switching the note.

This clever and amusing way of performing this trick was taught to me by a friend in Japan:

- Ask a friend if you can borrow a £5 note. When the person hands it to you, stick it in your pocket, say thanks and walk away!
- Turn back (no doubt to some uncomfortable laughter) and say, 'I'm just kidding', and pull out the banknote with the memorised serial number.
- Hand it 'back' to her, making it clear that you don't want to look at it. Instruct her to read the serial number to herself and concentrate on it. Then reel off the number with whatever patter you like.



If for some reason you get a banknote with a different design to the one you have, do another trick with it such as the levitating banknote that I describe in Chapter 8. When things don't go as planned, having an 'out' is always important.

Making money work for you: The telekinetic banknote

The Effect: You move a borrowed banknote without touching it.

The Secret: Moisture and the way you prepare the banknote cause it to bend automatically, with a little physical manipulation by the hand holding it. The illusion takes very little preparation and practice – and any paper currency works.

Follow these steps – also shown in Figure 4-2:

- 1. Lick your thumb and run it across the very centre of the banknote's face to apply a small amount of moisture, lengthways from top to bottom.**
- 2. Fold the banknote in on itself, rather like folding a book front to back, so the moistened area is on the inside.**

3. **Place the note between your two hands, with the two ends of the note closest to your body (so the loop is away from you) and begin gently rolling it backwards and forwards to create some friction.**

The paper develops tension as a result of the heat and rolling action, which makes it automatically fold in half.

If you open up the banknote lengthways, it tries to close the moment you let one side go. Hold one edge in your right hand against a table and extend it with your left hand. Let it go and it springs back.

4. **Fold the banknote over in half along its length (a tent fold), but don't crease it – especially in the middle.**

Gently crimp or pinch the ends so that when you lay the note flat on the table, it doesn't move.

Now perform the show, following these steps:

1. **In front of an audience, lift up the banknote and straighten it out between your two hands.**

Uncrimp the ends if you find they're not straight enough.

2. **Open up the note using both hands and rest it flat on the edge of the table.**

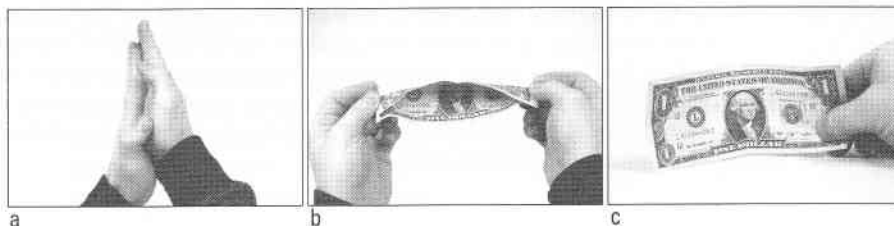
The right hand controls the banknote and serves as an anchor. The left extends the note all the way out and pulls away. To keep the note from snapping back, angle your right hand toward you so that it puts pressure against the left side end, thereby holding it in place against the table.

3. **To move the banknote with the 'power of your mind', simply relax the pressure with your right hand and the left side of the banknote starts to fold toward the right.**

You need a little practice to get it right, but it's not difficult. The rest is acting; move your left hand so as to suggest that you're moving the banknote with energy coming from your fingers.



Figure 4-2:
The PK bank
note trick.



Winning Big – Really Big

Just imagine knowing the winning lottery numbers in advance or being sure who's going to win at poker. How great would that be? With this series of tricks, that's exactly what you appear to be able to do (although afterwards your friends may wonder why you're not driving a Rolls Royce!).

Faking a winning lottery ticket

The winning lottery ticket routine is a favourite of mine and is based on the basic assumption swindle by my friend, the incomparable Jack Kent Tiller, a true innovator and producer of fantastic tricks. In this routine, I modify when and how the switch takes place and I reveal.

The Effect: You produce a lottery ticket and place it face down on a table in front of you. You hand six people business cards and ask them to secretly write one number on the back of their card. You collect the cards and hand them to a neutral third party (a seventh person) who verifies that they miraculously match the very numbers printed on the lottery ticket.

The Secret: Five of the six cards are switched before they get to be verified.

What you need: Some blank lottery tickets, a couple of pens, 11 business cards that are blank on one side and a business card holder.

Before your performance, you have to do a little prep work. Check out these steps:

1. Complete the lottery ticket slip.

Get a handful of these forms and fill in six numbers in pencil.

2. Prepare the business cards.

On the back of five business cards write a different predetermined number that corresponds to one of the numbers on the prepared lottery ticket (in Step 1), in different handwriting so they don't resemble each other. Stack the cards together (face down in reverse order of the lottery numbers) against the business card case, in the palm of your hand. That way, when you hand out the stack, the top card matches the first number on the lottery ticket.



When performance time rolls round, follow these steps:

1. Introduce the lottery ticket.

Pull out the lottery ticket and display it to everyone, but don't show the numbers. When you pull it out, fold it over and hide the numbers. Put the ticket down on a table and put a glass, a deck of cards or your wallet on top of it. Say, 'I have a lottery ticket here with numbers on it. We'll get back to it in a minute.'

2. Choose six participants.

Make sure that you pick people who aren't right next to each other when you do this routine. If they're too close, they can see what each other is writing. Line everyone up so that if you walk from person one to person six, they're all on your right side (you see why in a moment). Use people from different seats and keep them far enough apart that they can't see what the others are writing.

3. Open up the business card case and remove six blank business cards.

Doing so ensures the proper placement so that, when you switch out the cards, they don't look suspicious because the writing is in the wrong place.

4. Go to person number one and tell her exactly what you want her to do, while the others watch.

Say, 'I have six business cards here. Notice I'm holding them all vertically, and I'm writing a 1.5-centimetre line about 2.5 centimetres from the top.' Show this card to everyone. 'I want you to do the same thing. Think of a number between 0 and 9 in your head – don't share it with anyone else – and write it on the card. Then turn the card face down and I'll be back to collect it.'

5. Hand the first person the card and the pen, and then move to the second person.

Say, 'Here's a card; draw a line at the top, secretly write a number and turn it over so nobody can see'.

6. Repeat the process down the line, making sure that everyone protects their numbers.

As the first three are writing down their numbers, hand a card to the fourth participant and then say, 'Ahhh, you need a pen. I might as well collect the cards too.' Head over to the first person, take their card and place it face down on the card case in your left hand while still holding the hidden five pre-made cards.

7. Hand the pen to participant number four, and give out cards to participants five and six.



Just to add a measure of confusion, go back and collect cards and pens from participants two and three, and give the pens to participants five and six. Then, collect the fourth, fifth and sixth cards, along with the pens. If you find yourself all fingers and thumbs and struggling to multi-task, you can put the pens in your back pocket or use an assistant help you.

You now have a full stack on top of the card case and start heading to the sixth person, who you'll designate as the neutral referee in a moment, for what's about to happen next.

8. Say, 'Wait a second; I just realised I only need five numbers, not six.'

Turn to person number two and say, 'You know what, take these cards, keep them face down and mix them really well. When you feel ready, I want you to take the top card off and hand it to me.'

9. Retrieve the card and tear it up, saying, 'That one's officially out of play. I don't know who it belonged to, and neither do any of you.'

10. Start walking back to person number six (who'll be asked to be a judge now because you've just got rid of her card) and casually let your hand fall to your side to do the switch by simply rotating the stack of cards in your hand; just turn them over.

The five cards written on by the participants are now hidden, which leaves the five pre-written cards. When the judge reads any of the numbers, she'll assume that the card you tore up was hers – because she won't recognise any of the handwriting as her own.

Because it's on your left side and you're walking with your right side to everyone, the switch works perfectly.

11. Stop in front of person number six and say, 'Here, take these cards. None of us looked at them, so you're going to be referee. Don't turn them over yet and keep them in the same order.'

12. Say to person number one, 'Do me a favour, go and pick up the lottery ticket. I want you to read off the first number to everyone.'

13. Turn to the sixth person and say, 'And when she does, turn over the top card and read it out loud.'

The numbers on the lottery ticket and the cards are in the same order: a one-for-one match every time.

Making it big in Monte Carlo

Gambling is as popular as ever, for good or ill, and this trick is sure to get attention.

The Effect: You bring out a prediction in an envelope and place it on a table. Then, you take someone on an imaginary journey to Monte Carlo. You say that she's able to choose the casino she wants to visit and how much money she wants to bet. When the prediction is read aloud, you're right on both accounts, and she wins a perfect poker hand.

The Secret: You force everything.

What you need: A notepad, pen, envelope, a change bag, deck of cards, and some play money.

Before you present your trick, you have to do a little preparation. Follow these steps:

1. Set up the change bag.

A *change bag* is a dual compartment clear bag, which allows you to force a given slip of paper while appearing to offer choices. Write the name of different casinos on slips of paper, fold them over and put them on the non-force side of the bag. Some examples you can include are:

- Casino de Monte Carlo
- Monte Carlo Bay Casino
- Monte Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort

On an equal number of paper slips, write 'Monte Carlo Bay Casino' and place them in the force side of the bag.

2. On a piece of paper write, 'I predict that a randomly chosen member of the audience will freely choose the Monte Carlo Bay Casino hotel, bet £1,999 and win a hand of poker against the house.'

3. Set the deck.

This illusion uses a stripped-down version of poker that's played with ten cards. The deck is stacked in three sets of three, with a Jonah card (the two of clubs in this case) to assure whoever gets it loses. Use three fives, three jacks and three queens. The key to ensuring the person gets a winning poker hand is to deal it properly:

- Mark the Jonah with a pen somewhere on the back. Use a red pen to fill in a spot that you can easily see, but isn't obvious to anyone else.
- Take the ten cards (with the Jonah on the bottom of the stack) and place them on the top of the rest of the deck. From the top down, you have three sets of 'trips' and the marked Jonah.



I prefer to use this trick on stage, but you can perform it for smaller groups. Follow these steps:

1. **Ask for a volunteer and then say, 'We're going to take a little imaginary journey to Monaco. Once we get there, you'll stay in a hotel of your choosing, gamble the amount of money you want to and play a game of poker.'**

Continue with, 'Before we begin, I have an envelope here that I'm going to put on the table and leave in plain sight for now. You don't tell anyone what's in it, but it contains the prediction.'

2. **Put the envelope down, pick up the change bag and say, 'This bag contains some slips of paper with the names of hotels written on them.'**

Pull some slips out of the non-force side and read them out loud, showing the person as you do so. Read out some of the hotel names. Re-fold the slips and put them back in the bag.



Push the inside flap of the change bag over as you nonchalantly put your hand in the bag. Say, 'I want you to reach in here, but don't look – I don't want you to be influenced. Just reach in and take out whatever slip of paper you like.' Of course, it's the forced hotel because you made sure the side they reach into is the force side by opening up that side and then holding it open with your closed hand on one side of the bag. Say, 'Just put that in your pocket; I don't want either of us to see it yet.'

3. **Force the bet:**

- Say, 'How much money do you have on you right now? No, I'm just kidding! We're going to use imaginary money to make a bet.'
- Reach into your pocket and pull out the coin gimmick and the loose force coins (as I describe in the earlier 'Predicting what's in a person's pocket' section), while saying, 'You can see I have a pocket full of coins.'
- Put them back in your pocket and retain the gimmick by holding it in the curled fingers of your hand while your hand is inside your pocket and pressing your jacket against your leg to help open up one side, while the other hand opens the pocket so she can reach in.
- Say, 'Reach in and grab one.' She does.
- Say, 'Don't show me, but whatever it is isn't going to be enough for a bet in Monte Carlo. I tell you what, read the date on it. Whatever that is, and don't tell me, will be the bet. You get one pound for each year on that coin.'

'We have to bet that amount on something, so you and I are going to play a little game of poker. I'll pretend I'm the House.'

4. Deal the ten cards from the top of your deck down onto the table in a pile; discard the rest of the deck.

5. Instruct your volunteer to mix up the ten cards, face down.

You need to locate the Jonah.

6. Grab the deck and say, 'I did deal ten, right?'. Then begin counting the cards (face down).

Spread the cards, take note of the marked Jonah card's position, and say, 'Good. There's five for you and five for me.' Say this casually and naturally so as to not bring attention to the ruse. Remember where the Jonah card is in the deck.



If the marked Jonah is in an odd position – meaning that it's the first, third, fifth, seventh or ninth card from the top, ask your volunteer to deal. That way, you get the card and she gets the winning hand. If the position is even, you deal.

7. After the deal is done, say 'Right, you have five cards and I have five cards. In a moment, we'll see who won. I hope it's me! I could really use that money!'

8. Reveal the prediction by saying, 'Oh, wait . . . I almost forgot about the envelope.' Point to another person and invite her up on the stage. Say 'Can you help me out? Great. Give her a hand, ladies and gentleman.'

Ask this person to open the envelope and instruct her to read it out loud in a moment. Look at the first volunteer and say, 'Before she reads what's on that paper, let's recap: you freely chose a hotel, you freely chose the amount of the bet and you mixed the cards before they were dealt out. When she reads each line, I want you to read the slip out loud, tell everyone the bet number and finally, let's see who won.' Of course, all the items come out just as you plan. You can show everything now, including the winning hand.

Part II

Getting Tricky: Hands-On Mentalism

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"This is some of the most amazing sleight of hoof
I've ever seen."

In this part . . .

Imagine being able to touch people without touching them, bending metal with nothing more than the power of your mind. In this part you'll learn how to get your hands dirty with effects that are sure to amaze everyone you share them with.

Chapter 5

Playing with Paranormal Cards

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting familiar with card forcing
- ▶ Mastering fixed-deck tricks
- ▶ Discovering different types of deck

Unlike visual magic, mentalism doesn't feature fancy cuts, flourishes or displays of mechanical expertise. Instead, cards serve as nothing more than flimsy paper tools that broach the here and now to the far and beyond – piercing the veil and connecting you to the unknown. Effects that normally get the mildest of responses from an audience, now take on the monumental allure of revealing true psychic phenomena and unexplained supernatural ability.

In this chapter, you discover the basic concept of 'forcing a card' along with numerous tricks involving fixed decks. I also talk about more unusual types of decks – such as those for tarot and ESP – and how you can use these cards to create more weird and wonderful illusions.

Forcing a Card

In *card forcing*, you ask someone to randomly choose a card, but in reality you force the person to pick the exact card you want. Because the basis of this trick is simply knowing the card in advance, you can perform a variety of killer effects that help you build an equally killer reputation. In this section, I describe several methods of ensuring that an audience member 'chooses' a particular card. This can be done with a regular deck, or gimmicked one.



A forcing deck looks like a normal deck, but is gaffed or gimmicked in such a way that it allows you to force one or more cards onto someone. You can buy *forcing decks* that are designed to assist performers in forcing a card or cards. Although on occasion I've used such a deck because it better fits the needs of my routine, I feel that developing the skills and knowledge to allow you to use any non-gimmicked deck is far better; in this way you're able to use whatever deck is available when you're ready to perform.

Mastering the classic force

The one card-forcing technique is the granddaddy of all card forces! It's *the* classic force (think *Star Wars* and Yoda), and you must master it. Here's how – also shown in Figure 5-1:

1. Cut the force card to the middle.

- Put a known card on the top of the deck, or glimpse the one already there. This is your force card.
- Cut the deck (remove a block of cards from the top of the deck to where the force card is located and put that block of cards under the deck) so that the force card is now somewhere near the middle.

Keep a good eye on the force card because if you lose it, you're done for and can't complete the trick!

Start out any card routine by shuffling or mixing the deck – even if you're only pretending to do so. This shuffling helps create the illusion that what you perform is much more complicated than it really is.



2. Spread the cards.

Gently feed cards from your left hand to your right – using your thumb to pull over cards from the top. A slight natural gap appears where the force card is because of the way the deck rests in your hand. Say to your volunteer, 'Just reach out and touch one of the cards on the back when you feel ready.'

3. Bring the force card in line with your volunteer's finger.

As your volunteer reaches toward the cards, position the force card in line with his finger so that it lands on the card just as he's about to make contact.



Trust me when I tell you that moving your force card in line with your volunteer's finger sounds a lot harder than it really is. The more you practise, the better and more natural things become for you. In the world of conjuring – practice and timing are everything.

Consider trying out the classic force every time you pick up a deck of cards to perform for someone. At worst, you miss it and they pick another card. But that's okay, because you should have another trick ready to use as a get out. If you get it right and are able to force the card on someone using this method, you really appreciate just how deceptive this little gem can be.

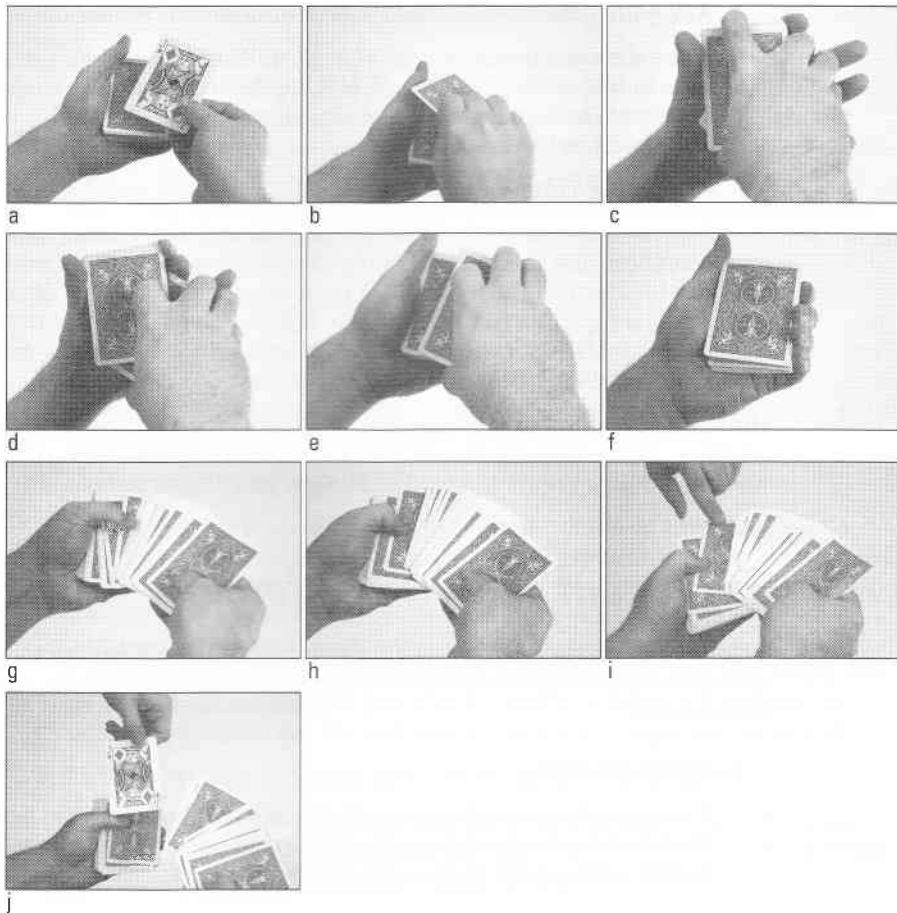


Figure 5-1:
Taking you
through
the classic
force.

Cracking the criss-cross force

This technique is one of the boldest ways to force a card I've ever seen – in part because it relies heavily on the fact that people have a tendency to not pay attention to what's happening right under their noses – or even to remember what they did only seconds beforehand. But remember, this is a force not a trick; it's a technique for creating tricks.

Here's how it works:

1. Shuffle the cards.

Be sure to leave the top card in place, which you secretly looked at or placed there before you began.



2. Ask your volunteer to cut the deck and look at the card.

Place the deck face down on a table or other flat surface and ask the person to cut the deck in half, placing the top section to the side. Instruct him to pick up the remaining half and place it sideways (cross ways) across the first half.

3. Reveal the volunteer's chosen card.

Say, 'You cut the deck anywhere you wanted; now take a look at your selection.' Lift the top half of the deck your volunteer cut and point at the top card on the initial deck underneath. This card is, of course, the original top card you peeked at in advance, and therefore the very same one from the spot where your volunteer halved the deck – or so he believes!

How you reveal the card is a matter of choice. You know what the card is in advance so you can use any combination of the methods described throughout this book to create the kind of illusion you like.

Trying out the 10–20 force

This trick is another card force that requires little skill, is easy to execute and works brilliantly every time – because it's based on simple maths. Here's how:

1. Set up the deck.

Place your force card nine cards down from the top of the deck. If you want to keep track of it easily, put a small pencil dot in the top right corner on the back of the card before you start.

The common card

Playing cards are generally cut palm size for easy handling, feature somewhat standardised motifs on the faces, have the same backs and are arranged into decks to be used for a variety of popular games, such as poker, gin rummy and spades. Most countries use some form of cards. They're believed to have been invented in ancient India and then spread across the globe. The Mameluke deck from Egypt – a set of

52 cards that are very similar to the ones used today in the West – is thought to have made its way along trade routes from the Middle East to Europe together with spices, sugar and other wares in the late 1200s. Documents refer to cards being used in 1371 in Spain, and the Swiss outlawed them in 1377. Today, you can find decks of playing cards in most homes, and certainly in any major supermarket.

2. Ask a volunteer to choose a number.

Say something like, 'I'd like you to name a number, umm, let's keep it simple, between 10 and 20. Out loud please.' You want to give the impression that you randomly picked a set of numbers, but in reality, this range is an important part of the illusion. For this trick to work the person must choose a number between 11 and 19. If he picks 10 or 20 say, 'Why don't you pick something a little less obvious . . . something *between* 10 and 20 – otherwise it's too easy for me.' The person chooses, in this instance, 19.

3. Count out the cards to that number.

From the top of the deck, deal one card at a time onto a table until you reach the number your volunteer chose. When you pass the force card at the ninth place, where you positioned it earlier, add another six cards onto the pile. Push the remainder of the deck aside.

4. Do the maths.

Here's the real trick. Add together the two digits of your volunteer's two-digit number – in this case 19: one plus nine equals ten ($1 + 9 = 10$). This number is then how many cards you must subtract, or deal off from the top of the new pile, to get to your force card. Look at your helper and say, 'If I wanted to keep this simple, and give myself an advantage, I could just hand you the nineteenth card to look at. But let's make this more difficult for me and give you the advantage here. If we take the number you gave me, 19, and add the two digits together, we get 10.'

5. Pick up the pile now and deal off 10 cards onto the table.

Now hand your volunteer the *next* card – it's the force card. You can do this trick with all of the numbers between 10 and 20 – it works every time as a result of the wonder of mathematics.



Running through the riffle force

I learned the riffle force as a little kid – and I've used it ever since. In fact, more often than not, the riffle force is my 'go-to' force when I borrow someone else's deck of cards and want to floor people with a supposedly impromptu performance.

Follow these steps:

- 1. Peek at or place your force card on top of the deck of cards before you begin.**
- 2. Riffle the deck.**

Hold the deck in a *mechanic's grip* in your left hand. This is a natural way to hold a deck of cards in the palm of your hand (generally your left). Your index finger is placed at the top of the deck (the short side), the ring finger, middle finger and small finger are on the long side opposite your thumb, which is laid gently over the other long side and slightly onto the top of the deck to hold it in place.

Explain to your volunteer that you want him to choose a card, but a little differently. Riffle the cards by running your thumb down the corner of the deck. Then say, 'I'm going to riffle the cards again, and when I do, I'd like you to tell me when to stop. Ready? Okay.' Riffle the deck again and wait to be stopped.

3. Slip the top card.

When instructed to stop riffling the deck, you need to get the cards in the right place for the trick to succeed. This move is the one that forces the card – so pay close attention!

4. With your right hand, lift the top packet (group of cards) off the deck – simultaneously slip the top card (your force card) off that packet by using the little, ring and middle fingers of your left hand.

As you pull the packet, the card stays in place and falls onto the packet.

To divert the attention of your audience from this move, turn your head and eyes to focus on the face of the card in your right hand and say, 'I can see this, so this isn't your card – your card is on the top of the pack.' You're using a form of misdirection.

5. Rotate your left hand to the right as you pull the top packet away – and tap the packet with your right index finger as you draw your audience's attention towards it.

The movement of your left hand, also known as a *wrist kill* in magic speak, hides the card as it slips off the packet very well. Try it and see what you think.

6. Offer your volunteer his card.

Push your left hand toward your volunteer and offer the card, saying, 'Your card's on top. Go ahead and take it.' Voila, it's the card that the deck was cut by following your volunteer's earlier instruction. What a coincidence!

Figure 5-2 takes you through these steps.



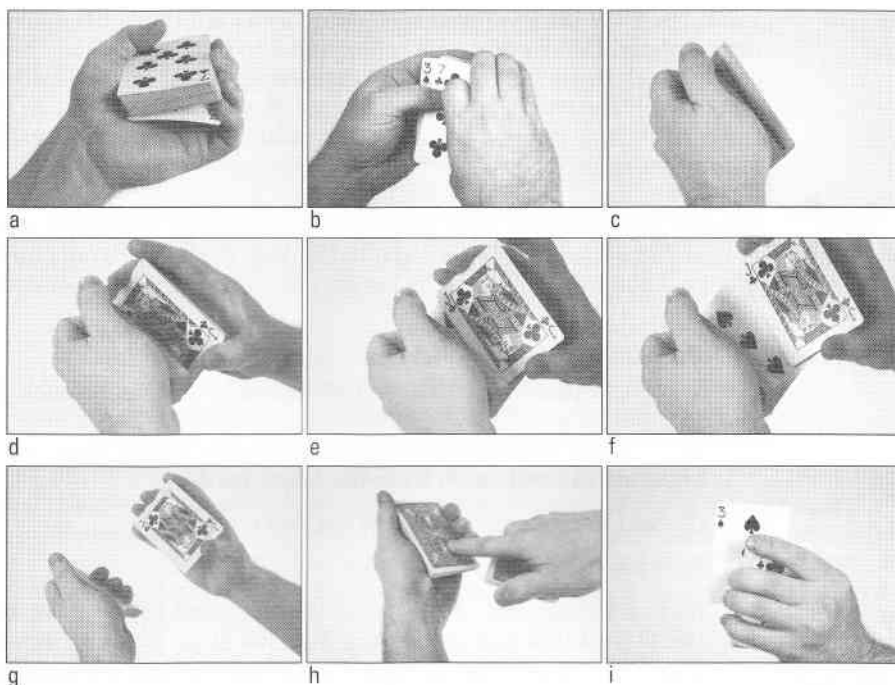


Figure 5-2:
Taking you
through the
steps of the
riffle force.

Focusing On Fixed-Deck Tricks

A fixed deck is a deck of cards that has been prepared in a certain way in order for a certain trick to be performed. Here are some great examples of tricks using fixed decks.

Seeing with your fingers

The Effect: Using only your fingertips, you're able to touch the face of hidden cards one at a time and determine whether they're red or black.

The Secret: You use a specially gimmicked deck of cards to perform the illusion. Unlike a normal deck of cards, the *stripper deck* – also known as a *biseauté deck*, tapered deck or wizard deck – is slightly tapered or trimmed on one of its long sides. This change is slight enough that most people handling the deck don't notice the difference, but when you become familiar with the



workings of the deck you can easily identify a card that's been taken from the deck, rotated 180 degrees, and reinserted into the deck. All you have to do is gently touch the deck when one it's squared (evened up on all sides) and you can feel the card sticking out slightly. In some cases, you can even see the card sticking out if you really concentrate, but it's not noticeable to spectators at all.



You can buy a stripper deck from most magic shops – and they often come in beginner sets. Don't be fooled into thinking that they're only for beginners, though. Used properly, you can create miracles with a stripper deck.

Sorting your stripper deck

Before you can perform, you need to prepare your stripper deck. Here's how you do it:

1. Separate the red cards from the black cards.

Discard the jokers and square the two piles.

2. Reverse the decks.

Pick up the red half of the deck, turn it around 180 degrees and put it on top of the black half of the deck. Feel the sides of the stripper deck, and you notice some indentations. These indentations are apparent because the tapered end of the red half is now opposite the tapered end of the black half. This arrangement is known as a *reverse colour setup*.

3. Mix the deck.

The current setup is obviously far too noticeable. So, place the deck on a table and *riffle shuffle* it several times (you can also perform this shuffle in your hands if you feel confident enough). This shuffle is also called a *dovetail* shuffle because when the deck is split into two even piles and riffled together, a dovetail pattern (like dovetail joints in woodwork) of interlaced alternating cards is created. Make sure that you keep the cards in their current orientation. That is, they must be shuffled in the same direction. If you turn one deck around, it will be misaligned – so be careful.

Organising the reds and blacks opposite each other means you can easily 'strip' them from each other.

Delivering a perception-enhanced performance

Your stripper deck is prepared (following the instructions in the previous section) and you're ready to put it into practice and enthrall your audience with your extra-sensory abilities!



Follow these steps:

1. Remove the deck from the box.

Show the faces of the cards to the audience.

2. Riffle shuffle the cards.

Be careful to retain the orientation of the reversed cards. Say, 'I'd like to show you something rather extraordinary. Have you ever heard of dermo-optical perception?' They probably haven't because it doesn't exist! 'That's okay, I hadn't heard of it either – I'd only experienced it. From a very young age, I could just sense colours with my fingers. I know it sounds strange, but I can prove it.' If someone says they have heard of this phenomenon – perfect; now you have a person in the audience confirming for everyone else that it's real!

3. Pick up the deck with your left hand.

Grip the deck face down at the end, with your middle and ring fingers against one side and your thumb against the other – keeping it perfectly squared. Keep your free index finger curled and gently apply pressure against the top of the deck. Hold the deck at waist height and parallel or horizontal to the floor.

The way you grip the deck underpins the entire trick – so get this bit right before moving on (see Figure 5-3).

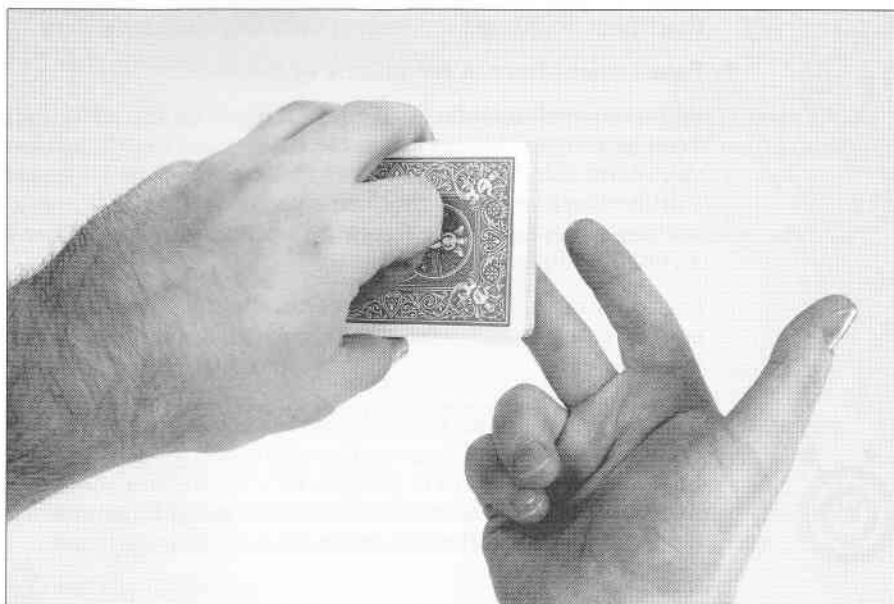


Figure 5-3:
The proper
grip.

4. Move the bottom card from side to side.

Use the index and middle finger of your right hand to gently move the bottom, face-down, card from side to side. This card will either feel tight or a little loose. – whichever one it is tells you the card's colour. Let me explain. However the card feels (tight or loose), take it out and drop it on the table so that you can see it. Say, 'I'll get rid of this one because we could all see it.' You've just identified the colour and whether the card is tight or loose.



Only four possible outcomes exist: loose-red, loose-black, tight-red or tight-black. You have no way of knowing what colour is going to be tight or loose until you test it by throwing one card down on the table.

To make sense of my instructions, imagine that the bottom card of the deck is loose and red, which means that any tight card is black.

5. Gently place one card at a time down on the table.

Even though only four outcomes are possible, you want to make sure that you set yourself up for success – rather than failure. You need to remember the phrase 'righty tighty, lefty loosey' (usually used in relation to nuts and bolts). Doing so means you can remember which colour card is loose and which tight.

Always put the loose card, be it black or red, on your left side of the table – and the tight one to the right. That way, you can always look down and remember which colour is which. The first time I tried this method, I had about a 95 per cent accuracy rate, which is far better than most people get if guessing their way through a deck.

6. Pause somewhere in the middle of the deck.

Before you exhaust the deck, place it down on the table just as you've been holding it and let your audience inspect your hands to show them you're not using any odd devices to look at the cards (such as a *shiner* – a little reflective device that helps you covertly peek cards); of course, nothing's there. If you're wearing a watch or rings, take them off and get a volunteer to examine them, too.

Let your audience examine the cards already sitting face up on the table so they can see that no markings, such as Braille dots or handwritten symbols, exist.

When you're ready, resume the demonstration.

Point at a member of your audience and ask them to call out what colour he thinks the next card is going to be – before you announce your prediction. This addition is a great way to show that your success rate is much higher than other people's.



Grasping the invisible deck

The Effect: You ask a volunteer in the audience to pretend that he has a deck of 52 cards in his hands, shuffle the deck and then choose one card – all in his mind. You pull a real deck out of your pocket, spread it out on a table, and the very card he chose is the only reversed card in the entire deck.



The Secret: This trick uses a gimmicked ‘rough and smooth’ deck that you can buy from any magic shop, or make yourself if you’re so inclined (I show you how in the next section). The deck is composed of 26 ‘rough and smooth’ pairs. That is, it’s a two-faced deck with the cards stuck together back to back in pairs – odd facing one side and even facing the other. Thirteen values are in each suit, with the kings paired together. That is, a king goes with a king rather than one of the other cards. With a light grip, you can fan the cards and they appear normal. With a firmer grip, the cards split from each other and stick in their pairs. To find the ‘chosen card’, all you need to do is figure out its corresponding pair in advance. By separating this pair at the right moment, you can create the illusion that the chosen card is reversed in the deck.

Getting your deck rough (and smooth) and ready

If you want to use your own gimmicked deck for this trick, roughing and smoothing it is an integral part of your preparation. You need:

- ✓ A new deck of cards
- ✓ A can of matte spray
- ✓ A newspaper to keep things clean



Use a reusable glue stick if you can’t find matte spray. Although magic shops sell ‘roughing’ spray, it’s nothing more than a relabelled can of matte finish from a hardware shop.

To create your rough and smooth deck, follow these instructions carefully:

1. Open the deck.
2. Remove the kings and discard the jokers.
3. Separate the deck into two piles – odd and even.
4. Spread the piles out next to each other, backs up, on a newspaper.
5. Do the same with the kings.
6. Spray a light coat of matte finish on the back of each card (in a well-ventilated area) from about 30 centimetres (12 inches) away.
7. Let the cards dry.



A light coat does the trick – so long as you do cover the entire back. If you're too close, the cards warp and bend. Give the cards 24 hours to dry before you use them.

If you decide to use a glue stick, apply a light coat to the bottom of each odd card and then firmly stick it to the back of the corresponding even card.

Now you're ready to assemble your rough and smooth deck. Make sure that:

- ✓ The even cards face one side, and the odd cards face the other.
- ✓ The red kings are considered odd, and the black kings are considered even (the kings have the same numerical value).
- ✓ The suits are paired spades with hearts, and diamonds with clubs.

An easy way to remember this setup is that out of all the suits, spades and hearts look most similar.

- ✓ Each pair of cards when added together equals 13; for example, 9 of spades and 4 of hearts.

The ace in each suit is valued at 1, jacks are valued at 11, queens are 12 and finally the kings are 13.

Following these guidelines when setting up your deck means that the deck looks properly mixed no matter which side you show your audience.



If you hold the deck face up toward your audience and you see odd cards, they see even cards.

Putting the invisible deck into practice

Preparation is key to this trick. Now you've created (or bought) your rough and smooth deck, you can follow these steps:

1. Put the entire deck into the box with the odd cards facing the opening.

Keep in mind that the box only opens one way – at the top using the flap. But that flap can be facing you or facing your spectators; I always open the flap towards me and place the odd cards so they're facing that side, nearest the stick towards me. Obviously not all boxes are identical, so just make sure you know exactly where the odd side is, so you can make sure to open up the right side required for the trick (keep reading; it all becomes clear!).

2. Ask your volunteer to name out-loud the card he's thinking of.

Assume that he's a Motörhead fan and chooses the ace of spades. As you know, the spades are always paired with the hearts. The ace is



valued numerically at 1, and so to get to 13, you must find a card valued at 12 – and that's the queen. Because the ace of spades is odd, it's already facing you if the deck is opened as I describe in Step 1.

If your volunteer names a card to the even side, turn the box around before moving onto Step 3.

3. Display the deck to your volunteer.

Bring the box down to about waist height, and pull out the deck – face up. Discard the box.

4. Find the 'chosen card'.

Thumb gently through the cards to find the queen of hearts. When you see it, apply firm pressure between your thumb and index finger against the cards and they'll separate. On the opposite side will be the chosen card. What's great about this trick is that only this card in the entire deck appears to be reversed.

Jog the card out, and ask your volunteer to take it. When he turns it over, he sees that it's none other than the ace of spades! Cue applause.

Staging a human lie detector

The Effect: You let someone pick a card and then read his body language to determine what the card is – just like a human lie detector, as the case may be.



The Secret: You use a card-handling technique called *stacking the deck*, in which you stack the cards in a given order. This trick is based on a *sequential stack* (also referred to as a *circular stack*), which works because the cards rotate sequentially so that you can determine the card following and preceding any given card, even when the deck has been cut.

Performing a lie detector test alongside your sequential stack trick works really well. By probing your volunteer with questions concerning the identity of their chosen card, you create the illusion that you can read body language to tell if he's lying.

Preparing a sequential deck

Before you can begin your routine, you need to get your deck together. Here's how to prepare it:

1. Separate the cards into suits.

Arrange the cards by suit into four lines running from ace to king. Using a brand new deck is a good idea because it already comes in this order.

Cards 2 to 10 obviously have values on their faces. Now make ace 1, and jack, queen and king 11, 12 and 13, respectively.

2. Place the cards in suit order.

Put the four piles of cards in *CHSD* order from left to right, that is, clubs first, hearts second, spades third and diamonds last (*CHSD*). To make it easy to remember, this arrangement is called the '*CHaSeD*' order.

3. Create four main piles.

Create four face-up piles, with each pile in correct ace-to-king order, with the king facing you. Leave the packet with the king of clubs alone for now.

4. Arrange the hearts.

Cut ten cards from the face of the hearts packet, placing them on the bottom of the same packet; the 3 of hearts is now on top.

5. Arrange the spades.

Cut seven cards from the spades packet and put them on the bottom of that packet; the 6 of spades is now on top.

6. Arrange the diamonds.

Cut four cards from the diamonds packet and place them on the bottom. The 9 is now facing you.

7. Create the stacked deck.

Pick up the king of clubs and put it face up in your left hand. Pick up the 3 of hearts from the second pile and place it on top of the king of clubs. Put the 6 of spades and 9 of diamonds on top, forming a packet.

8. Repeat Step 7 for every pile.

Go from left to right until you've gone through all the packets and formed a single deck.

9. Check your work.

Go through the stacked deck face up and check that the cards run in clubs, hearts, spades and diamonds order – repeating sequentially throughout the whole deck. If you discover a card that doesn't follow this order, you probably need to go back to Step 1!

The Si Stebbins stack uses a 13-card sequence that repeats for each suit. Every 13 cards, a card of the same value repeats in the next suit that follows in the *CHaSeD* pattern. A king of clubs on the bottom of the deck means that you can find the king of hearts, spades and diamonds at the 13th, 26th and 39th spots, respectively. Cards of the same value and colour repeat every 26 cards throughout the deck, too. If you pick the 2 of hearts, for example, you find the 2 of diamonds 26 cards away.

10. Perform a trick using your stacked deck.

Cut to any card and look at the bottom card of the top packet, and then add three to whatever its value is – the next face-down card should be the sum of that card, plus three, in the next suit order.

For example: $5D + 3 + \text{next suit} = 8C$. You can also go in the opposite direction by subtracting: $5D - 3 - \text{next suit} = 2H$. I always use the jack as a middle reference point because it's the card that brings you back to the ace or the starting card of each suit, and the lowest value in this stack numerically.



You can use any of the forces I describe in this chapter, or even a marked deck, instead of preparing a stack. But the stacked deck allows you to step back and not touch the cards, creating the impression that you couldn't have done anything 'tricky' during the performance.

Hashing out your performance as a human lie detector

Stacked deck? Check. Audience? Check. Extraordinary ability to detect lies? Check! You have all you need. Here's how you take this trick to town:

1. Set the scene.

Get your audience in the right mood for your trick. Discuss polygraphs, stress analysis or popular television shows that revolve around lie detection and being able to read people's body language.

2. Take out your stacked deck.

Say, 'Let's use this deck of cards here for a little experiment – you can see that all the backs are the same, all the faces are different and they're completely mixed up.' Fan the cards so that people can see you're telling the truth.

3. Ask a volunteer to pick a card.

'In a moment, I'm going to ask you to choose a card for us to use.' Cut the cards several times to give the subtle impression that the deck is being mixed. 'The card in question will serve as a baseline of truth – much like a baseline question does during a polygraph examination. It's the one thing we know to be absolutely true and constant.' Hand the deck to your volunteer and say, 'Here, take this and make a few complete cuts anywhere you like – behind your back. Then, look at the top card, but don't let me see it.'

4. Take the deck back.

Show everyone that the cards are once again all different and say, 'As I told you, these cards are all different and you could have picked any one of them.' This chat serves as both a convincer and your chance to peek the bottom card so that you can calculate which card he has.

Turn away and say, 'Please show the card to everyone so that they can serve as judges. If I get things right, they'll know when it happens and can spontaneously burst into applause.' That line always gets a laugh, but also encourages people to clap when you're done with the performance.

5. Begin your performance.

Even though you've used your method of calculation to work out the exact identity of your volunteer's card, you still want your audience to believe that you're going to have to make a guess by reading your volunteer's body language. Explain that your goal is to figure out the value of the card through a series of tests and questions – and your volunteer's goal is to keep it hidden from you. Ask your volunteer to put on his best poker face and lie. Explain to your audience that doing so helps to prove your lie-detecting abilities. The trick's all about your performance from this point on. Put on your acting hat and go for it.

Say, 'I'm going to ask you some questions and all you have to do is say "no" to every single thing I ask you. Do you understand? No matter what I ask you, just say the word "no" – even if it's true!' I use this ploy because it makes it very easy for your volunteer – he doesn't really have to think about what you're saying.



Have some fun: if your volunteer is male, ask whether he's male, which more often than not receives a 'yes' answer. I then tease him and say, 'I thought you understood the rules.' If he says 'no', like he's supposed to, it gets a laugh anyway.

Start off with very simple questions. 'Is it a red card?' If he says 'no', and it is, take his pulse. Say, 'Okay, is it black?' If he says 'no' again, say, 'Yep, your pulse jumped a few beats . . . and I can see based on how you answered – that little curl in your lip. You're totally lying – it *is* red!'

Tackling Tarot Cards

A *tarot deck* contains 78 tarot cards, each containing an allegorical picture. A so-called psychic told me that tarot cards have been used to predict the future and provide guidance in people's lives for thousands of years. Although I don't, in any way, believe that they hold this kind of power or significance (other than that which people choose to assign them), I do know the history of this deck, where it comes from, the meanings of the cards and how to use them. Having some basic knowledge of tarot cards is important if you're planning to use them in your performance.



When performing mentalism, you're an actor and you need to be able to play the part. Do a little research and you can use the right terms with confidence. Check out the nearby sidebar 'Tales of the tarot' to find out more on tarot cards.

Telling a good fortune

The Effect: A spectator selects a card but doesn't show it to you. After a suitable build up, you give him a brief reading and then divine or determine the card's identity through mystical means.



The Secret: You use the 10–20 force (as described in the 'Trying out the 10–20 force' section earlier in this chapter).

The Setup: You need a single-faced tarot deck in which the backs are all the same. Place your choice of card in the 10–20 force position or nine cards down from the top of the deck. Personally, I prefer to use an uplifting card such as the Wheel of Fortune (see *Tarot For Dummies* by Amber Jayanti (Wiley) to find out more about the meaning of the individual cards). Memorise the meaning of the card you decide to use and the basic scripting I provide in this chapter.

This trick is incredibly effective because it focuses on topics in which people are innately interested: love, money, relationships and employment.

Follow these steps:

1. Ask a volunteer to think of a number between 10 and 20.

Say, 'Sixteen? That's a powerful number. It has to do with good decisions, if I remember correctly.'

An awareness of basic numerology can be useful when scripting this trick. You can find information online or pick up a copy of *Numerology For Dummies* by Bjoern-Erik Hartsfvang (Wiley). This time, though, use a stock tarot meaning for this trick, no matter what number your volunteer picks.

2. Hand the volunteer the deck of tarot cards.

Force him to choose the card you want to use, using the number he gave you (see Chapter 3 on influencing your volunteers' decisions). Ask him to not show you the card.



Say, 'I'd like you to think about the image on the face of the card.' While he's doing so, stare at him as if you're trying to connect: 'Don't say a word please – just focus and think about the card.'

3. Reveal the volunteer's card.

After a suitable build up, recite the following script. It's designed to be used with either the Wheel of Fortune or The Lover cards; choose which one to use based on who you're performing the trick for.

Close your eyes and say, 'Yes, I *am* seeing a connection to the number. It's definitely an intimate number – and it's related to success. I'm feeling both joy and happiness, but also seeing cause and effect. Some hard times may be coming, but they're leading to a positive outcome. I see a future based on what you do today – the decisions you make right now, today, are going to matter in your future. There's something here related to love – to a relationship. But what I'm really seeing is success and good fortune. Is your card the Wheel of Fortune? It is? That makes sense.'

Pulling off the Lovers Unite

The Effect: Two people freely choose a card from a tarot deck only to discover that they've both picked the same card.

Tales of the tarot

Tarot cards are a variation of playing cards, which appeared in the first book on tarot – *Martiano da Tortona* (circa 1425). They were used for a variety of cultural games, first in Italy and, later, in France. Although evidence exists that playing cards were being used for divination as far back as 1540, as demonstrated in *The Oracles of Francesco* by Marcolino da Forlì, the tarot wasn't widely adopted for this purpose until the late eighteenth century. In fact, if it

weren't for the imagination of a Swiss clergyman, Antoine Court de Gébelin, who not only spoke out against the tarot, but also wrote about the cards and vigorously suggested people stay away from them because they were 'ungodly', the tarot probably wouldn't have been associated with the occult at all. That's an interesting lesson – censoring something actually draws people's interest to it.



The Secret: Lovers Unite is a spin on a very old trick that normally uses two decks of playing cards, but I use tarot cards because I enjoy their various meanings. To make this trick work, use the riffle force to make two volunteers 'choose' the same card, although from two different decks; see the 'Forcing a Card' section earlier in this chapter to see how. (Of course, you can use whatever force you're most comfortable with.)

For this trick, you need two single-faced tarot decks whose backs are all the same. Follow these steps:

- 1. Shuffle the decks well and place the force card of your choice on the top of the deck. Repeat this process with the second deck.**

Depending on your audience, you can make the trick romantic (by using the Lovers card) or platonic for good friends; just choose a card with an appropriate theme. Place the decks back into their boxes.

- 2. Ask two volunteers to help perform the trick.**

I specifically look around for people whose body language suggests an intimate relationship, or who are wearing wedding rings.

Ideally, perform this trick with couples, especially new ones, because they're 'in love' and thus enjoy the theme of your performance.

Say, 'If you're interested, I'd like to do a tarot reading for you two – I have a good feeling about you both.'

- 3. Take out both decks and ask the two people what their relationship with one another is.**

Whatever they say, respond with 'I thought so.'

- 4. Ask both volunteers to pick a card.**

Fan out the deck and show that all the cards are different; do not allow the top card (the force card) to be seen. Allow the woman to pick a card first from the first deck. Execute the riffle force and tell her not to look at it yet. Repeat this process with the man with the second deck. Now ask them about their relationship – such as where they met, how long they've been together and so on. If you're in the mood, perform some cold reading (see Chapter 13 for more on this technique).

- 5. Reveal the cards.**

When you're ready, ask your volunteers to simultaneously turn over their cards. Stay quiet for a second and let the volunteers realise they've both chosen the Lovers card. Say, 'I didn't expect that at all. I was going to do a reading based on the cards, but clearly you two are meant to have a relationship at this point in time. Only you can determine where it goes from here.'



Exhibiting Extra-Sensory Ability: An Introduction to ESP Cards

Tricks using *ESP cards* (also known as Zener cards) all work on the same basis.

The Effect: An ESP (*extra-sensory perception*) card is sealed in an envelope and placed on a table. A spectator randomly chooses a card; the two cards match.

The Secret: You use one of the forces described earlier in this chapter (see the 'Forcing a Card' section) to make sure that the card chosen is the card you already placed in the envelope.

In this section, I describe three ways to incorporate ESP cards into your routine and make audiences in awe of your extra-sensory abilities.

Discovering five miracles

The Effect: You shuffle a deck of ESP cards and then deal a packet of five cards with little circular labels on their backs face down on the table. A spectator then guesses what the face-down cards are, one by one, and the corresponding symbol is drawn on the back. When they're turned over, each one is right.



The Secret: You 'steal' the drawn on set of cards identified by the volunteer during the performance, and reveal a set of previously prepared cards underneath.

Planning your miraculous performance

To perform this amazing trick, you need the following equipment:

- ✓ A pack of 25 Zener cards (five sets of five, each set bearing the same symbol).
- ✓ A packet of plain white 2.5-centimetre (1 inch) in diameter sticky labels. Keep the cardboard backing; you that too.
- ✓ Two very thin 0.77-centimetres in diameter neodymium circle magnets (super strong, ceramic-based magnets) or a shimmed card (one that's been peeled in two and had a small piece of very thin ferrous metal inserted before being glued back together).



Zener cards were invented by Karl Zener, a psychologist who worked with parapsychologist J. B. Rhine at Duke University in the 1930s to test claims of extra-sensory perception. Also called ESP cards, the standard deck is composed of five sets of five cards each; the sets feature a circle, a cross, three wavy lines, a square or a star on the faces.

You can purchase all of the items required for this trick online at my website (www.jameslclark.com)!

Follow these steps:

1. Prep the switch cards.

Remove one circle, square, cross and wavy lines card from the Zener deck. Open the packet of stickers at the top so that it stays sealed on the remaining three sides; I prefer to cut the top off with a pair of scissors. Place one circular sticky label on the centre-back of each card. Then, write the corresponding symbol in the middle of the label.

2. Prep the star cards.

Remove five duplicate star cards from the deck and place one sticker on the centre-back of each card. Don't write anything on the labels, though – that happens during your performance.

3. Set the magnets.

Take a card off the top of the Zener deck and tape one magnet on its face. Tape the second magnet in the packet of labels on the centre of the cardboard backing, under the sheets of labels themselves – making sure that it faces the right direction to attract the magnet hidden under the card. If you look at the card or the pack of stickers, they look normal. But if you gently touch the packet on the top of the deck, it discreetly picks up the card and anything that's placed on top of it, such as the four extra star cards.

4. Take the five cards on which you've drawn symbols.

Place the cards face down in the following order: circle, cross, wavy lines and square – the square is on top as the first one that you'll deal off later. Put the card with the magnet or shim on top of those cards. Place the four star cards with stickers on them on top of the deck. Put the fifth star card with a sticker on the bottom of the deck. Make sure that the remaining cards from the face-up set of cards are in repeating order. You're ready to go.

Performing the five miracles

This trick created with Zener cards is one of my favourites and is a classic example of making the spectator the star of the show. After a suitable build

up and patter related to the history of ESP cards and mind-reading experiments, open the deck of cards and place the prepared deck on the table. Place the packet of sticky labels on the table away from the cards, but within reach. Now follow these steps:

1. Show the pack faces.

Pick up the deck of 25 Zener cards and turn them face up to show your audience the star card on the bottom. Spread the cards to show all the symbols, but don't spread them so far as to reveal the magnets. If you're using a shimmed card instead of the magnets, though, it doesn't matter because it can't be detected visually. Square the deck and turn over the star card on the top. Explain that you've placed stickers on the backs of the cards.

2. Mix the deck behind your back.

Place the deck behind your back, remove the star card from the bottom of the deck and put it on the top of the deck – five star cards are now on top of the deck, followed by the magnet or shimmed card and then the four prepped cards. Give your audience the impression that you're mixing them by moving the cards around, riffling the edge and so on – but don't change the order. Say, 'I need to make sure that you didn't see the order of the top five cards, and so I'm going to mix them a little to prevent cheating.'

3. Deal the cards.

Bring the deck back to your front and deal off five cards in a row, from left to right. Place the remaining deck to your left near the stickers, but not close enough for them to touch.

4. Mix the cards.

Mix the cards around on the table and then line them back up from left to right. Ask someone else to do the same thing, but caution them not to show the faces by accident. When the cards are in a row say, 'All right, none of us know the order of the five symbols – the square, for example, could be here or here or even here.' Touch different cards to illustrate the point.

5. Draw the symbols.

Say, 'Researchers who test psychic ability find during laboratory experiments that very few people are able to guess all the symbols. Some people get one, maybe even two, but never all of them.'

Pick a volunteer and ask him to look at the cards. Start with the circle card and ask him to tell you where he thinks it may be – get him to point to a location. You then draw a circle that looks like the one you drew during your setup, in the middle of the circular sticker on the back.

Place that card on the top of the deck. Repeat this process with the cross, wavy lines and square – placing them on top of the deck when you've drawn on their backs. Hand him the pen and say, 'I can't draw a star very well; why don't you draw it. While he does that . . .

6. Make the switch.



Pick up the packet of sticky labels and nonchalantly say, 'When you're done, put the card on the top of the deck.' At the same time, tap the packet of stickers on top; it picks up all the cards placed on top of the magnet or shimmed card. Discard the packet of stickers, being careful not to expose the cards on its underside. Slide the deck over towards the person so he can do as asked.

7. Reveal the five miracles.

Pick up the deck and deal off the cards once again from left to right – putting them in proper order. Because you prepared the cards beforehand during the setup, they come off the deck in the order in which they were put on it in Step 5, so the person is no wiser. Show him the remaining cards in the deck, demonstrate that they don't have stickers on their backs and then discard them. Ask your volunteer to turn the face-down cards over one at a time to reveal the five miracles.

Accomplishing the automata

The Effect: You mix a standard deck of 25 ESP cards and a volunteer chooses one card that becomes the symbol everyone focuses on. Another volunteer mixes the card back into the deck. You pick up the deck, concentrate on it and reveal the symbol everyone's thinking of.



The Secret: This trick is based on mathematics. Follow my instructions to the letter and it works every time. You need at least five people to help you out with this trick.

First, prepare a Zener deck. Organise the cards consecutively in the following order: star, square, wavy lines, cross and circle. Return the deck to its box and you're ready to go.

After a suitable build up about ESP cards, ESP itself and whatever patter you want to include, follow these steps:

1. Ask a volunteer to deal 12 cards.

Hand the deck to a member of the audience and ask him to deal 12 cards, face down, one at a time, onto the table. Put the rest of the deck to the side for the moment.

2. Ask a second volunteer to mix up the cards.

Pick up the discarded deck and hand that to a second person. Get him to pick up the 12 cards on the table, shuffle them and make a deck.

3. Ask a third volunteer to deal the deck into five piles.

Hand the whole deck to a third member of the audience and instruct him to deal five separate piles of five cards, one card at a time – one pile at a time.

4. Ask a fourth volunteer to select three piles.

Get him to choose three from the five piles, shuffle them together and place this new pile of 15 cards to one side.

5. Ask a fifth volunteer to shuffle the two remaining piles.

Instruct him to shuffle the remaining two piles (containing ten cards) together. You now have two separately shuffled piles of cards on the table. The one from Step 4 (with 15 cards) is 'Packet A' and the one in this step (containing ten cards) is 'Packet B'.

6. Choose a symbol.

Ask one of the volunteers to point to Packet A or Packet B.

Here, you use an *equivoque* (or the magician's force) because whatever packet the person picks, you use Packet B for this step. If he points to A say, 'Great – we'll put that aside for the moment.' If he points to B say, 'Great, we'll use that one.'

Instruct your volunteer to remove a single card from the middle of that packet, look at it, show it to everyone except you, remember it and put it into Packet A.

7. Ask a previous volunteer to mix Packet A.

Get him to shuffle Packet A and to make sure that the symbol card is lost in the middle of it.

8. Reveal the symbol.

Take the packet and look at the faces of the cards without showing anyone else. In every case, the originally chosen symbol card is always the extra symbol card in this packet. Whatever symbol is two or less in the packet is the one the audience picked. After a suitable build up, remove one card and place it on the table. Ask the volunteer to name the card out loud and get someone else to turn your card over. They match!



Bringing down the house with 'Bob's Your Uncle'

The Effect: A volunteer cuts a standard deck of ESP cards, and you place the cut card to the side as a prediction. The remaining cards of the ESP deck are divided into two separate piles and when they're cut, the cut cards in each pile match the prediction card.



The Secret: The deck is prepared in repeating order, for example circle, star, square, wavy lines and cross – five times. The actual order doesn't matter, so long as it repeats. When the volunteer cuts the cards and removes the card that was cut to, you must complete the cut by putting the packet that was pulled off to the bottom of the deck to maintain the stack order.

Take the remaining 24 cards and deal two decks of 12 – one for each of you. Simultaneously, you both deal one card at a time face up onto the table until you have a matching pair. When you both have a matching pair, it's the same as the card the volunteer cut to.

Voila!

Chapter 6

Writing without Being Detected

In This Chapter

- ▼ Writing secretly with the right tools
- ▼ Practising to get your technique flawless
- ▼ Performing for an audience
- ▼ Writing while not writing at all

If you can master writing something down without anyone seeing, you can build an entire act around it. From nail writing gimmicks to pocket writing and using dead pens, this chapter exposes the inner-workings of one of the most useful and diverse of all mentalism skills.

I share with you a few secret-writing tools, some covert techniques for using them smoothly, as well as several great writing illusions. I also demonstrate how you can use 'pretend' writing (your own or a volunteer's) to great effect.

Hiding Your Writing with Swami Gimmicks

The origins of the Swami Gimmick are lost in history. But these little props allowing performers to write covertly with their thumbs were certainly in use in a variety of flavours long before 1898, which is when William Robinson (also known as Chung Ling Soo) referred to them in his book *Spirit Slate Writing and Kindred Phenomena* and exposed the tricks that mentalists can do with similar gimmicks.

In this section, I describe several types of Swami Gimmicks that you can use to perform the tricks detailed in the later section 'Trying Out Your Skills in Front of an Audience'. When I first encountered the Swami, I experienced one of those rare 'ah ha' moments that changed the way I thought about mentalism tricks. When you understand the power that you too can have at your fingertips, I think you'll feel the same way.



Always keep some extra Swami Gimmicks as back-ups. Invariably, just when you need your gimmick, you discover that it's lost or broken.

The nail writer

By far the most common and inexpensive *nail writer*, a *Swami Gimmick* that fits under the nail, is the 'C' type (shown in image a of Figure 6-1). Many of the top mentalists in the world use this particular version because of its ease of use. The 'C' type is crescent-shaped, with a small clamp that holds pencil lead on the top, and is made of semi-pliable metal. When properly positioned, the 'C' slides under your nail with the lead holder resting on top.

The boon writer

This prop, (shown in image b of Figure 6-1) consists of a small flesh-tone disk with a pencil lead on it that you can stick to your thumb.



A couple of details make boon writers less than ideal for covert writing, however:

- ✓ They're less stable than other Swami Gimmicks, which can cause your writing to be illegible (although in fairness, this problem has been remedied to some degree with the release of newer designs that are wider and more ergonomic).
- ✓ They're often supplied with some sort of adhesive putty, which is bulky and doesn't stick well to your skin. For this reason, I affix my boon writer to my thumb with a clear adhesive 'dot', a sort of circular glue droplet, that you can buy at most office supply shops.

The thumb-tip writer

The *thumb-tip* gimmick (shown in image c of Figure 6-1), is a staple mentalist prop consisting of a moulded hollow plastic thumb that slips over your actual thumb. You use to make items disappear and appear, covertly switch things and so on. The thumb-tip writer is a cross between a standard thumb tip and a Swami Gimmick, where the lead is affixed to the end of a thumb tip in some fashion with some sort of adhesive (check out image c of Figure 6-1).

The ring writer

Ring writers are a particular version of the Swami Gimmick made of a flesh-tone plastic ring with lead affixed to it (check out image d of Figure 6-1). You can purchase them at magic shops or make one by following these simple instructions:

1. **Get your supplies.** You need a plastic thumb tip that fits tightly on your thumb, a sharp razor blade or box cutter, a black permanent pen, some thick pencil lead, a nail about the same thickness as the lead, pliers, all-purpose glue and a lighter.
2. **Cut the ring.** Place the thumb tip snugly on whichever thumb you intend to write with. Mark the location where you want to insert the lead with a pencil or pen dot.



I prefer to have the lead mid-pad on my thumb.

Now cut off the entire top of the thumb tip about 3 millimetres ($\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch) above that mark. Repeat this step by cutting off the entire bottom of the thumb tip about 3 millimetres ($\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch) below the mark. You now have a ring.

3. **Affix the lead.** Hold the end of the nail in the pliers. Heat the end of the nail with the lighter and then gently puncture the ring where the dot is so that the ring melts all the way through.

Be careful not to burn yourself.

When you've made the hole, break off a piece of lead about 3 millimetres ($\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch) in length and stick it through the hole so that it's flush. Dab some glue on the inside of the ring to hold the lead in place and let it dry.



The finger pick writer

I almost always use a finger pick writer (shown in image e of Figure 6-1) for covert writing. Having tried out most kinds of Swami Gimmick, I'm convinced that nothing beats this version. Finger pick writers are easy to make, inexpensive, dependable, stable and adjustable. Follow these steps to make your own:

1. Get your supplies ready.

You need a 020-size banjo finger pick that fits your thumb, some flesh-tone model paint, a small model paint brush, a rivet the same size as the pre-made hole in the pick, a piece of pencil lead the same diameter as the rivet, all-purpose glue and a pair of scissors. You can find the banjo pick at most music shops and the rest at craft shops.

2. Prepare the pick.

When you look at the pick, you can see that it has a longer part at the tip, which is used to make contact with an instrument's strings – you need to remove that longer part. With the scissors, cut it off, being sure to round the edges and follow the curvature of the pick itself where your thumb fits in. Locate the hole (on the opposite side of the 'wings' that tighten around the thumb) and dab a small amount of glue around the edge. Place a rivet in the hole with the lip making contact with the bead of glue. Allow it to dry.

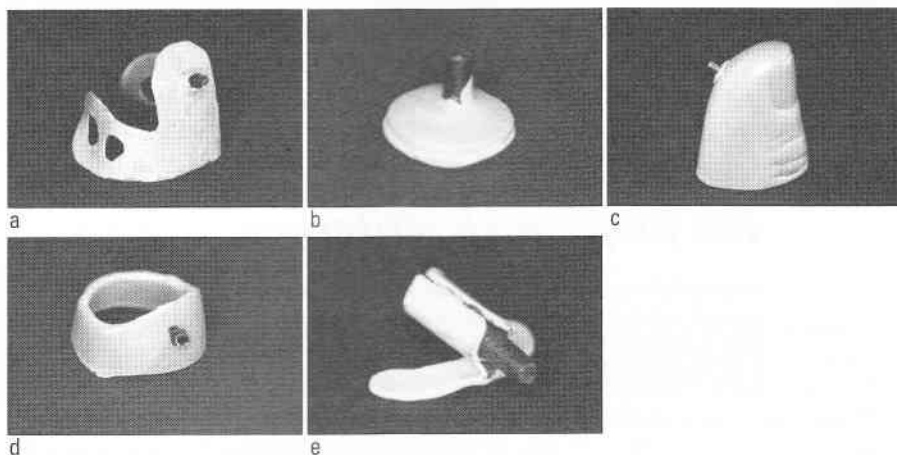
3. Paint the pick. I use flesh-colour model paint that comes in a little bottle, and I completely cover the entire pick. You can also airbrush it if you have the kit or use tan-coloured spray paint: it really just depends on your skin tone. Try to match it the best you can, but it doesn't need to be perfect.**4. Insert the lead.** To finish up, squeeze a small bead of glue into the bottom of the rivet and stick the lead down into it (check out image e of Figure 6-1). Allow it to dry.

Figure 6-1:
Five different types of nail writer.

Filling your pencil with lead

Swami Gimmicks generally use Number 2 pencil lead, which is about 2 millimetres ($\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch) in size.



Use a standard HB pencil for your 'writing' because people recognise it instantly and thus aren't suspicious of it. Also, if you hand out pencils to an audience, make sure they match the one you're using.

Whatever pencil you use, however, just make sure that it matches the lead in your Swami Gimmick. The same goes for when you refill any broken or worn-down lead.

The best kind of pencil lead comes in packs and is made for clutch-type mechanical pencils; you can find it in most office supply shops. You can also buy coloured pencils, which allow for some nice routines that can up the level of perplexity of a secret writing trick.

Understanding that Great Techniques Lead to Success

The secret to creating fantastic mentalism illusions with a Swami Gimmick on your thumb (such as those I describe in the earlier section 'Hiding Your Writing with Swami Gimmicks') lies in the way you do things. If you combine the tips that I provide in this section with plenty of practice, you'll be hot to trot.

Bluffing with a pencil

The pencil bluff technique is a tried-and-test psychological convincer that mentalists all over the world use, but it requires a bit of thought and understanding before you do it.

The goal of the pencil bluff is to make sure that all the audience members truly believe that you wrote the prediction down in advance because they saw you do it . . . even if you didn't. Anyone *burning* you (watching you closely) sees only the pencil enter play, you writing something down, and the pencil leave play.

You can achieve this effect in one of two ways:

- ✓ You write something down for real and leave a space for the prediction at the end of a leading sentence such as 'You will choose'.
- ✓ You pretend to write something down but don't make a mark on the paper.

Pretending to write can be harder than you think. For example, if people can see the pencil moving, they may be able to pick up that you're not writing because your action just looks fake.



To overcome this problem, dip the end of your pencil in clear nail polish. The pencil looks normal, but doesn't write, which allows you to press down on the paper as normal and 'write' without fear of leaving a mark.

As well as bluffing your writing, you also want to ensure that the audience is acutely aware that, after you've written down a prediction, you have no way of adding anything to it. Be very conspicuous and deliberate about this aspect of your performance.

Make a point of looking for your pencil for a second, because doing so subtly draws the audience's attention to it. Then, find the pencil and use it. When you're done 'writing', toss the pencil onto the table in front of you as if to say, 'I don't need that anymore', to add a measure of finality to your actions.



I know some performers who borrow other people's pencils, but that's a really bad idea. You never know what type of pencil someone's going to give you. Always use your own props so that you can be sure that the trick works every time.

Holding out for a great trick

The term *hold out* comes from the gambling world, but magicians co-opted it to mean any device that 'holds' something, such as a card, coin or, in this case, a Swami Gimmick, so the performer can gain access to it as needed without anyone in the audience knowing.

A hold out for your Swami Gimmick can be as simple as your pocket, which is what I use most of the time. I keep my Swami Gimmick in my right front trouser pocket if I'm not wearing a jacket, or clipped on the inside of my jacket near my pencil, held in place with a bulldog-clip hung from a safety pin. That way, when I return my pencil after writing a prediction down, I can slip the gimmick on in preparation for the real work. I've even stuck my boon to a business card in my pocket, because on more occasions than I care to admit I've lost it and not realised until the moment I needed it!

I know many performers who wear three-piece suits and keep a gimmick in each pocket of their waist-coat so when they stick both thumbs in, as if they're resting, they can easily put the Swami Gimmick on whichever thumb they need at the time. Of course, this technique presumes that you can write equally well with either thumb – an important skill to develop for any serious mentalist.

You can easily stick a boon writer (which I describe earlier in this chapter) to the back of a notepad or clipboard, or even somewhere like the top of a pencil. A friend of mine safety-pins his business card to the inside of his jacket, next to the pocket holding his pencil, and sticks several boon writers to it.

A more sophisticated hold out that you can make yourself comprises two neodymium rare earth magnets, some duct tape, and a little all-purpose glue. Simply attach one magnet inside your jacket and stick the other to your shimmed (lined with a thin piece of ferrous-like tin) gimmick. When needed, simply curl your fingers under your shirt or jacket, pull the gimmick off and slip it onto your thumb.

During a stage show, you can always place your Swami Gimmick on the table in front of you but behind something so the audience can't see it. People don't know what it is even if they do spot your Swami Gimmick; actually I've never had anyone catch me with it even when I bring a person up on the stage.

Dressing and undressing your finger

You need to be able to put your Swami Gimmick on your thumb and take it off without looking at it, and without anyone in the audience seeing you do it. Think of it like changing your clothing and not wanting anyone to see you in the altogether. Modest mentalists take the time to learn to dress and undress their fingers privately!

Taking your Swami Gimmick off ('ditching' it) is even easier than putting it on. After all, it's sitting conveniently on the end of your thumb, so just pull it off with your index finger and hide it in your hand.



One of the best moments in which to remove the gimmick is when you put your pencil away during the trick. The entire sequence goes as follows:

- 1. Slip the Swami Gimmick on in a moment when your audience isn't focusing on you.**
- 2. Bring out a notepad and ask a volunteer to think of something, perhaps a colour, a number, the change in her purse or whatever, but to not tell you what it is.**

3. Appear to concentrate and then pretend to write your 'impressions' or what you're 'getting from her' on the pad with a pencil. Make a point of sticking the pencil behind your ear when you're finished (a common ruse to keep the pencil in full view). Really, you didn't write anything at all.
4. Hold the pad in your right hand and ask what the person thought of. Secretly write it down with your gimmick and then hand it off to your right hand and face it toward the person.
5. Reach up while she's focusing on what was written down, grab the pencil and, as you're putting it away inside your jacket pocket, ditch the Swami Gimmick too.

Ignoring your gimmick

The plot of *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Hans Christian Andersen centres on a set of 'invisible' clothes made for the emperor that can't be seen by anyone unfit for his position or hopelessly stupid. The emperor can't see them, but pretends to because he's afraid people will find out that he's unfit himself. He parades the new clothes all over his kingdom, with everyone maintaining the pretence, until a child proclaims that he's not wearing any clothes at all.

Similarly, you need to act as if you can't see that you're wearing a Swami Gimmick. By pretending that you can't see it on your thumb, you start to relax when having it on. You do want to take minor precautions to protect it from being seen, but it's so small and innocuous that nobody's going to notice it anyway. As long as you're not sticking your thumb up in the air or making any kind of obvious movements with it, you're fine.

Don't get me wrong: at first, you feel as though you have an enormous device on the end of your hand just calling out for the audience to notice it. Whenever you know something that 'they don't', feeling entirely uncomfortable with that knowledge is the normal psychological response. The more you get out and perform before an audience, though, the less you feel like that.



The Swami Gimmick is flesh-coloured, nobody knows you have it and few people even know that it exists. Anyway, you're going to keep the audience focused on other things and nobody knows what trick you're going to perform (and so doesn't know what to look for) until you've completed all the dirty work. As long as you act naturally, everything goes fine and nobody spots anything.

Holding what you're writing on

With a little practice you can discover how to write secretly on just about anything with your Swami Gimmick, but the stiffer the paper the better. Try out a few options and decide what works for you.



I prefer to use the blank back of a business card, which also allows me to hand out my contact details to people after I've performed for them. A business card is the perfect size and thickness for my tricks; because they're small, you can also keep lots of them in your pocket. Another bonus is that nobody thinks twice about them because they're so common. You can also use index cards, but they're a little too big for my taste.



To successfully write using a Swami Gimmick on your thumb you need to feel comfortable; you don't want to pick a method of holding the paper that's difficult, cumbersome or, worse, looks strange. I've found that writing on business cards while holding them horizontally in my right hand works well and feels natural.

Never contort your hand when writing secretly or people will notice.

Ideally, just let a card lie across the fingers of the hand wearing the gimmick. If you like, let your arm hang to your side naturally and write while in that position. You can also write with your arms folded over one another, with the card and writing hand under the bicep of the opposite arm. In this position, your hand is partially hidden, with just a section of the card sticking out.

I personally tend to hold the paper nonchalantly in my right hand with my index and pinkie fingers straddling the top and bottom of the card I'm writing on. Those fingers effectively 'clip' the card in place, and the middle finger and ring finger serve as support when my thumb writes.

As far as I'm aware, nobody has ever publicised that position but it just makes sense to me. You can then wave the card around as if you're 'talking with your hands' and, during an offbeat moment, write in whatever you need to. To your audience, you're doing nothing more than displaying the card in plain view for them to see.

When legibility is critical and you have to write more than a few letters or numbers, hold your hands together with the card in-between your fingers and thumbs, as if you're reading it. This position can be a life-saver when you're trying to make the secret writing look good.



To ensure that nobody can see your thumb clearly during this process, watch your angles. In other words, make sure that people can't see the 'secret' goings on because they're able to observe you from a different perspective and perhaps catch you writing covertly. As Bruce Lee said in relation to martial arts, 'Use what works . . . forget the rest.'

Taking your time

As you get to know your Swami Gimmick, you find out how to develop a readable writing style through practice. I prefer to print so people can read my writing clearly, but you may discover that cursive is easier for you. However you write, though, you need enough time to get down whatever you require for the trick, which is something you have to gauge through experience.

I always prefer the shortest route to my destination, and so I use as few numbers or letters as possible. I may have someone name one, two or even five numbers because writing those quickly and legibly is relatively easy for me. Likewise, single words such as names work well too.

You need to avoid rushing, so limit the amount you need to write covertly. You can, however, easily stall for time when you're performing, and you may well have to do so to give yourself the time you need.



I like to miscall a number so the person corrects what I say. For example, if she calls out 143, I say 'Thank you, the number you named is 134.' She then yells out the correct number and I get a little longer to write it down. Verbal misdirection can really help you keep a show going smoothly.

Practising your secret writing

Practice doesn't make perfect, it makes progress. And like every aspect of mentalism, you have to practise if you want to get any good at it. Even more importantly, if you don't practise, you both look like an idiot and can potentially expose secret methods to non-performers. I can't encourage you enough to take this advice seriously and to practise, practise, practise before you try your hand at covert writing in front of an audience.

The best way to develop the skill you need to write legibly and discreetly with a Swami Gimmick is simply to do it. Just as you can't become a good runner by standing on the side lines cheering other people on, you have to get out there. You need to take the time to develop muscle memory, and that comes through repetition.

Covertly writing while wearing a Swami Gimmick

When I started out in mentalism, I put on my gimmick and wrote the numbers 0 to 9 and the entire English alphabet over and over again on the back of blank index cards. At first, the cards

looked as though I'd dipped a chicken's claws in pencil dust and allowed them to walk all over them. But I didn't give up. You too can stick with it; with practice, you really do make progress.

At first, practise your secret writing with one hand, because 99 per cent of the time you need to do it with just that. You have to be skilled enough to be able to write with your preferred hand while doing something else with your other hand, whilst simultaneously addressing the audience or participants.

Don't neglect practising with both hands. Doing so does take some serious effort and patience, but the beauty is that nobody ever suspects it. When audience members see you write with your right hand, they never look to see whether your left thumb is covertly writing while your right hand is empty!

Writing secretly in your pocket

This method of writing secretly doesn't need a gimmick but does require that you're able to write with one hand. All you do is use a small pencil and write normally in your pocket on a piece of paper. Nonchalantly keep your hand in your pocket, which is a common stance, and when the number is announced, write it down and then bring out the paper as you see fit.



Don't put your hand in your pocket until you're almost ready to pull the paper out. The effect is much more powerful if the paper appears to have been there the whole time. For this reason, I suggest only asking for a two-digit number. You can then pretend to look for something in your pocket very quickly, write the number down and say, 'Ah, here it is. Funny you said 66. That's what I was thinking.' You can then show the paper.

Trying Out Your Skills in Front of an Audience

When you're starting out as a mentalist, you may want to perform your newly acquired secret writing skills for people right away: it's entirely natural. I've

heard performers say, 'It might be hard to read because I wrote it quickly' or some other such nonsense. If you have messy handwriting when using your Swami Gimmick, you're doing yourself a disservice. The better your thumb-writing looks, the more convincing your act is.

Don't make excuses for a lacklustre show: instead, take the time to improve and do it right. Everything you do on stage that's normal, such as writing, needs to look perfectly normal.



The hard-hitting tricks that I show you in this section require that:

- ✓ You're familiar with the range of Swami Gimmicks and have chosen one that works for you (check out the earlier section 'Hiding Your Writing with Swami Gimmicks').
- ✓ You've practised thoroughly the techniques that I describe earlier in 'Understanding that Great Techniques Lead to Success'.
- ✓ You can write the alphabet and numbers 0 to 9 legibly using a Swami Gimmick on your thumb.



Don't repeat the same trick before the same audience. By all means use a Swami Gimmick for many different tricks, but if you do the same trick in exactly the same way several times, someone is likely to catch on.

Predicting a name

This trick is one of my favourites when working on stage: it involves a specially gimmicked envelope that allows you to write through a hole onto a card inside. To prepare, write on a card 'I predict that in two weeks from today I will meet' and leave a space underneath. Place the card in a card-sized envelope and seal it.

On the back of the envelope, cut a rectangle about 2.5 centimetres (1 inch) high by about 5 centimetres (2 inches) long where you're going to write a name with your Swami Gimmick. Nobody can see the slot except you, of course. Then follow these steps:

1. Throw a foam brick into the audience.

Ask whoever catches it to throw it on to a random female.

2. Address the woman with the brick.

Say, 'Great. Now, have we ever met before? No, I thought not. In my hand, I have an envelope with something inside that I wrote two weeks ago. But first, would you be so kind as to say your name out loud so that everyone can hear it.' She does so.



To stall, say, 'I'm sorry, a little louder please.' At that point, use your Swami Gimmick to write her name secretly on the card through the slot in the back of the envelope. Continue with, 'If you wouldn't mind, can you come up here really quickly and take this.'

3. Look at the audience and say, 'As you can see, I've kept this envelope in plain view the entire time.'

When the woman comes on stage, tear open the envelope very openly and cleanly and leave the card sticking out. Hold out the envelope for her to remove the card.

4. Say, 'Now, please read the card aloud.'

Accept the applause as the audience realises that you predicted this very meeting.

This trick used to be my show opener . . . it's that effective. I'm not kidding when I tell you that the audience gasps.

Performing the living-and-dead test

Early mediums, psychics and spiritualists commonly used tricks like the living-and-dead test as a way to demonstrate their 'ability' to connect to the other side. Generally, a sitter (a term derived from the spiritualist movement in the 1800s to denote a person coming in for a reading) is asked to write down the names of five people: one dead and four alive. Then, the 'psychic' is able to determine, by supernatural means, which one has died. The late Al Baker shared a very simple version with the magic fraternity in the 1960s, which is quite easy to do with a Swami Gimmick.



I've always felt that this trick, and indeed tricks of this nature in general, are a bit morbid. I've seen people cry during them. For that reason, I prefer to ask whether an audience member has had a pet who's passed away: maybe a dog, cat or even a hamster. I then ask the person to write the pet's name down instead, along with four made-up similar names.

Follow these steps:

1. Take out a blank card and write the numbers 1 to 5 on it with your pencil.

Ask someone to think of a deceased pet and to write that pet's name next to any one of the numbers, but not to show you or anyone else. When done, instruct the volunteer to write down four random names next to the remaining numbers and then to hand the card back to you.

2. Hold your pencil in your hand.

Say to the person, 'You've now written down five different names, one of which is your deceased pet. I never met your pet and had no connection with her. There's no possible way I could know which of these names is hers. Correct?' Nod your head as you say this to the person and she nearly always agrees with you. Continue, 'Even though I didn't know your pet, I can tell you that any living creature who's passed over carries with them a different kind of vibration that can be detected. I'm going to close my eyes for a moment and ask my spirit guide to help me find your pet. I'm going to visualise each of the names and ask that all the names go black except the name of the pet who's passed. Ahh, yes. I see.'

3. Open your eyes again and pretend to mark the card next to the name.

Say, 'I believe I have the name and I've marked it here just to be sure.'

4. Put the pencil down and, while holding the card out, ask your helper to announce out loud the name of the deceased pet.

When the name is said to you, secretly make a mark next to it with your Swami Gimmick and say, 'Interesting. It would seem that yet again my spirit guide hasn't failed me.'

Anticipating a country

I love to travel and so do a lot of other people. A great little trick involves asking someone to think of a place she's been to or would love to visit but to not tell you where it is.

Write down your prediction, using whatever method you like, and leave a space on the card or paper for the name of the actual country. Then, after getting rid of the real pencil, ask the person to share the name of the country. When she tells you, write it down with your Swami Gimmick at the same time as you ask her, 'Why'd you choose that location?'

With a little practice, you can turn this trick into a cold reading opportunity too (check out Chapter 13 for more on cold reading).

Discerning a hidden drawing

This trick is a great example of how you can turn a simple technique into a mind-blowing experience for a participant with just a little showmanship. You need a plain white envelope, a piece of paper and a piece of aluminium foil. Pre-fold the paper, wrap the foil around it so you can't see through it and put it into the envelope.

When you find a suitable person to impress, bring up the topic of mentalism or the paranormal and move into this routine when you feel the timing is right:

1. Hand the person the envelope.

Say, 'I tell you what. I'd like to try something that runs in line with what we've been talking about. Take this home with you. Inside you'll find a piece of paper and a piece of aluminium foil to wrap it in so that nobody can see inside. I want you to draw anything you like, but let's not make it too complicated. It should be spontaneous and flow freely from your mind directly to the paper. Try to draw it in one motion without lifting the pencil off the paper. When you've done that, fold the paper, wrap it, put it back inside and seal the envelope. You can bring it back to me in the morning. Just don't tell anyone what you've drawn. Okay?'

2. Meet the person the next day.

Say, 'I'm excited. I've tried this a few times now, but I'm not very accurate. I keep thinking the more I practise under these strict conditions with people like you who're willing to help me, the better I'm going to get. But I'm not hoping for anything spectacular.'

3. Take out a card and tell the person that you're going to try to draw what comes into your mind.

Ask her to place the envelope in your hands for a few seconds. Move the envelope around, turning it upside down, sideways and so on, as you gently feel it. Don't look directly at it, just sort of look off to the side as if you're trying to get a feel for the drawing.

4. Hand the envelope back and instruct the person to re-trace the drawing in her mind as if she's holding a pencil in her hand at that very moment.

Focus on her and then pretend to draw what you 'see' with a pencil with nail polish on the tip. When you're done, hand her the pencil and say, 'Okay, this is my best guess. Like I said, I wouldn't get too excited. Do me a favour now and show me your drawing. I want to see how I did.'

5. Look at her drawing, act somewhat surprised and say, 'Okay, well, that's interesting.'

To buy some time while you secretly draw, ask her why she drew what she did. Get her to explain what came into her mind so that you can mirror it a little before revealing what you drew. By appearing to be influenced by her story, you can create the illusion that something much deeper is going on. After a suitable build-up, hand her your card or just turn it around and show her.

Advertising your telepathic skills

This trick works really well when you want to perform for a small group – for example, when guests are visiting you at home. You need a co-conspirator to work with you as your assistant and a small stack of magazines on a table. Say something about your telepathic abilities and offer to demonstrate:

1. **Get your assistant (who you've already filled in on the details of this trick) to leave the room.**

Ask any guest to freely choose any magazine she likes, to look for the most interesting full-page advert she can find and show it to you.

2. **Take the magazine.**

Note the page number while you point to the advert and say, 'This one right here? Perfect.' As you do that, turn the magazine toward everyone and show them the ad while simultaneously secretly writing the page number in the upper-right corner of the cover.

3. **Call your assistant back in and, without saying a word, hand her the magazine.**

She looks at the cover, reads the page number and thumbs through the whole magazine from front to back once to 'get a feel' for the pages that have been looked at.

Ideally, she also takes a second to nonchalantly wipe off the number you wrote on the cover by running a finger over it, but in such a way that she doesn't call attention to her actions. All she has to do is turn to the page, look at the full-page ad and continue through the magazine. When she reaches the back, she closes it, puts it down and you can get her to reveal the chosen advert in whatever manner you like.



Darting around for a prediction

Here's a great trick for the pub:

1. **Challenge a friend to a game of darts.**

Before you start, pretend to write down on a beer mat how many points she's going to score with three darts.

2. **Get her to tally up the scored points after she's thrown her darts.**

Secretly write the total on the beer mat and hand it to her.



I love using this trick to get a free drink by saying, 'Hey, I tell you what. If I can predict how many points you'll get by throwing three darts at the board, you have to buy me a beer. If I'm off by more than 10 points, I'll buy the next two rounds.' Thus far, I've never lost.

Creating a great initial effect

Take out an ordinary deck of cards and shuffle them; then follow these steps:

1. Look through the deck and appear to 'settle' on a given card.

Ask someone to tell you her initials and say, 'I'm going to make a prediction. I'm going to write your initials on a card.' Pretend to write the person's initials, discard the pencil (with nail polish on the tip so that you don't physically write anything) and shuffle the deck again.

2. Ask the person to imagine that she has the deck in her hands.

Tell her to imagine shuffling the deck and picking a card. When she can see that card clearly in her mind, ask her to name it out loud.

3. Fan out the deck while she names the card.

Out-jog the card (push it up from the fan, but keep it still within the fan) and put your hand on it as if you're going to take it out.

4. Look at her again.

Say, 'Now, just to be clear. I went through this deck and found a card I thought you might pick out of the 52 cards. I wrote your initials on that card and then put it back into the deck. You then imagined shuffling it and picking a card. The card you named was?' Let her answer.

While you're saying that and have your hand on the card, secretly write her initials on it with your Swami Gimmick.

5. Pull her card out of the fan.

Hand it over with your *dirty* hand (the hand with the gimmick on your thumb). Doing so is easy if you keep your thumb tucked up under your hand.



Practise in the mirror a few times to see just how well this trick works.

Pooling your resources for a prediction

Picture a game of pool. Here's a simple trick to perform when your opponent is breaking to determine who gets solid and who gets stripes (based on the first ball to be potted).

Say to your playing partner, 'Hey, I'd like to try something before you break.' Pull out a business card and tell her that you're writing down the number of the first ball that you think is going to go in a pocket.

When she breaks, pay attention to the first ball to go in and secretly write what it is with your thumb gimmick with the card in plain view. Then hand it over.

Scoring at football every time

Here's a 'betcha' kind of trick that you can have fun with when watching a football match on TV with some mates. Follow these steps:

1. **Tell your friends that you're going to predict the final score of the match.**
2. **Pull out a business card, write 'The final score will be' and stick it 'face down' on a table.**
3. **Lay the pencil across the top of the card so that nobody picks it up.**
4. **Flick the pencil out of the way when the match finishes and pick up the card, saying 'All right, you've been watching this game too. What was the final score?'**
5. **Write the score down secretly at the exact moment that you're asking the question.**
6. **Hand the card out for the others to look at.**

If someone asks why you didn't tell everyone to place bets at the local bookies based on what you knew, just say that you never use your powers for personal gain!

Tearing things up with a newspaper trick

This trick never fails to amaze. Here's how you do it:

1. **Take out a business card, pretend to write a word on one side and then place the pencil aside.**

Now ask someone to help you out and hand her a copy of the day's newspaper.

- 2. Instruct her to take out any full sheet she fancies and to drop the rest of the paper on the floor.**

When she's done that, get her to rip that sheet in half and to choose one half and throw the other side on the floor.

- 3. Ask her to rip the held piece in half.**

Get her to repeat the process until she gets down to a hand-sized piece.

- 4. Tell her to pick any full word she can find on that piece and to say it out loud for everyone to hear.**

When she does so, create some time to secretly write it down by asking her to repeat it but louder. Say, 'Thank you. Now, to recap: you took any sheet out of today's paper and ripped it in half. You then picked a side and continued to repeat that process until you had a piece of the paper you could choose a word from. Then, you freely picked that word and named it out loud. For the first time, can you please read what I've written in advance on this card?' It matches.

You can take a bow now. No, seriously.

Matching chairs, colours and numbers as if you know the future

This trick is easy and yet provokes such strong reactions from the participants and the audience that I use it before hypnotism routines. It allows you to create the impression that you know things about the audience members, which adds to the mystique of the whole show.

On the stage, arrange seven chairs placed stage left to stage right with numbers taped to their backs so that everyone can see them. Then follow these steps:

- 1. Get seven people to join you on stage.**

At random, one at a time, ask each person to choose a chair to sit on. At your fingertips are seven cards with the colours 'red', 'blue', 'yellow', 'green', 'black', 'pink' and 'white' written on the face. The moment someone sits down, ask her to choose a colour from the pile and to name it out loud. Hand her the corresponding card and ask her to keep it face down. Continue until everyone has chosen a seat and a colour.

- 2. Ask the people to turn over their cards all at the same time.**

To their amazement, the colour they each picked has their seat number on the opposite side!



Obviously, the cards aren't really numbered in advance; you just say they are. The secret is to write the number on the back when each person chooses a colour and you hand the cards out. You only have to write a number, and so the process is fast and painless.

Reading projected thoughts

The Vaudeville magician Alexander used this trick in his shows with great success. It's simple, direct and powerful; in fact, a quintessential 'packs small, plays big' type of trick that so many mentalists love to share with an audience. You can use it close-up, in a parlour or at Wembley Stadium with thousands of onlookers watching you on massive screens:

1. **Take out a card and pretend to write a number of things on the blank side.**

Place it down on the table so that nobody can see the back. In fact, you've not written anything at all.

2. **Address the audience.**

Say, 'I'd like to try an experiment in thought projection, which you three people can help me with.'

3. **Pick up the card and hold it at arm's length as you point to three different people.**

Say, 'You, please. Name a colour. And you, sir, please name a date. Finally, will you please name a city?'

4. **Write the things they say down secretly as they're speaking.**

When you get to the third person, hand out the card to someone else to read aloud.



Working with Dead Pens

Taking advantage of an audience's expectations and assumptions is one of the key ways to pull off a dynamite illusion (as I describe in Chapter 1). Just like a pencil with clear nail polish on the end (that I cover earlier in this chapter in 'Bluffing with a pencil'), dried-out marker pens don't write. Everyone watching assumes that the marker pen is doing exactly what it's been manufactured to do. The following tricks are based on that very assumption and don't need you to write secretly with a gimmick on your thumb. Have fun.

Marking the spot with an 'X'

This trick is so simple that you'll be shocked at how well it's received when you perform it.

The Effect: On a table, you place an envelope with the word 'Prediction' written on the front. You produce a deck of cards, hand it to someone and say you want to conduct a little experiment. The person places the deck behind her back, mixes the cards and then writes an 'X' on whatever card she stops at. She mixes the cards up one more time and brings them back out.

You spread the cards across the table: one card is clearly visible as the only one in the deck with a black 'X' on it, but you don't turn it over just yet. A volunteer opens the envelope, places the prediction card inside it, face up, and then places the envelope on the table. When someone else turns over the card with the 'X' on the back, it matches the prediction in the envelope exactly.

The Secret: You draw an 'X' across the back of any card you like using a black permanent marker pen and return it to the deck, somewhere in the middle. You repeat the step with a duplicate card, and place it in the envelope. When the audience member 'writes' an 'X' on the card, she's using a duplicate pen that's dried out and doesn't actually write.

What You Need: An envelope, a deck of cards, a duplicate card of your choice to serve as the prediction and two permanent black marker pens. Take the cap off of one of the pens and let it dry for a day or so until it no longer writes. Remove your prediction card from the deck, write an 'X' messily on the back and then return it to the deck. Place the matching duplicate card into the envelope.

The Performance: When everything is set up, pull out the envelope and place it on the table in front of you and your volunteer. Take out the marker pen and, making sure that everyone can see you do it, on the front of the envelope write the word 'Prediction'.

This psychological ploy, known as a *convincer* in magic circles, helps to solidify the idea that you're using a 'real pen'.



Knowing a circled word

The Effect: You write a prediction on a notepad and turn it over so that nobody can see it. You bring out a magazine and ask a volunteer to pick a

page. She then places the magazine behind her back and blindly draws a circle somewhere on the page. When she brings it out, she picks one of the words that the circle is touching and announces it to everyone. When you turn the pad back over, your prediction matches the randomly chosen word.

The Secret: You force the page in the magazine on which you've already circled a word. She's using a pencil with clear nail polish on the tip. As long as it doesn't write on the page, she assumes that the circle is the one she just drew.

The Setup: Pick an area in the middle of a right-side page near the front of the magazine, and draw a penny-sized circle around a large word, but make the circle also touch a few others. You want one clearly circled longer word right in the middle, and one sort of in the circle but above it. Take note of both the larger word and the smaller one, and commit them to memory.



Forcing the Page: Grasp the magazine with your left hand on the spine near the top, with the cover facing you as if you're going to read it. Make sure to keep it closed so the subscription card doesn't fall out. Proceed as follows to force the page:

1. Turn the magazine casually counter-clockwise at some point during the presentation.
2. Grab the top of the magazine near the card with your left hand and the magazine bottom with your right.
3. Slip your right little finger covertly into the magazine at the break nearest the spine, with your ring finger, middle finger and index finger curling under the magazine and both thumbs on top.
4. Make sure that the audience is on your left so that to anyone looking you seem to be just holding the magazine face up in your hands, with the spine facing your stomach (if audience members are to your right, they see your 'little finger break').
5. Instruct the person helping you to remove the card and stick it between any pages she likes, somewhere 'down' around the middle (this instruction ensures that the card is under the little finger break and force page).
6. Open the magazine by sliding your right hand (with the little finger staying inside and acting like a guide) up the side toward where she placed the card and clip it with the fingers.
7. Let go of the magazine with your left hand in one continuous motion (it comes down to meet your right hand, the fingers entering the break and pulling back the magazine over itself toward you).



You appear to have opened the magazine right where your volunteer wanted, because the card pulls out of where it was and is in your right hand against the force page.

The Performance: Addressing the audience say, 'I'm going to write a prediction on this notepad.' Then follow these steps:

- 1. Write down the smaller word first across the top of the page, leaving room for the longer word directly underneath it.**

Cross out the smaller word and put the notepad face down so that nobody can see it. Ask for a volunteer.

- 2. Force the page and get her to place the magazine behind her back.**

Give her a pencil and say, 'Place this behind your back too. I want you to draw a small circle somewhere around the middle of the page, about the size of a penny. Do you understand? Okay, do that now.'

- 3. Ask her to bring the magazine out to her front and to look at the circle to see whether any words are on it.**

Say, 'Take a look at wherever you drew the circle and tell me if you can see any words. Look for a clear word and if there's more than one, the longest one.' Of course, you already know what it is. Ask her to say the word out loud to everyone. Pause and say, 'Wait a second; did you have another word, but change your mind?' Whether she did or didn't doesn't matter.)

- 4. Say, 'Is there another word there too?'**

She tells you the other smaller word out loud too. Now you're all set. After a suitable build-up, reveal your prediction however you want.

Chapter 7

Sneaking a Peek for Peak Performances

In This Chapter

- ▼ Giving a ripping performance
- ▼ Glimpsing the power of the peek
- ▼ Taking a close-up peep
- ▼ Impressing to impress

If a piece of information is written down, you can bet that a mentalist can determine a way of finding out what it says, usually by taking a peek. This chapter reveals the inside scoop on how to get the inside scoop to help you perform all manner of tricks. Just note the following quick definitions and you can get going on looking into peeking:



- ✓ A *peek* is the mentalist term for covertly glancing at something. It's one of the most powerful methods for obtaining supposedly hidden information.
- ✓ A *billet* is a small piece of paper that you can use during performances to obtain information. To most people such an item is nothing special, but as a mentalist you know that it provides a definitive way to access people's innermost thoughts without them knowing how you did it.

Tearing Things Up before an Audience

Imagine having someone write anything he likes on a borrowed slip of paper, which is then folded and torn to shreds, but you're still able to know what it contained. Impressive, yes? In this section, I describe a couple of variations on this trick.

Carrying out the classic centre tear

One of the most effective ways to gain access to hidden information is the *centre tear*, which gets its name from the fact that the centre of a folded piece of paper is covertly torn out so that you can read whatever was written down on it. Follow these steps – also shown in Figure 7-1:

1. Fold the billet.

Pre-fold the billet in quarters (half one way and then half again the other way) before you want to perform. You decide which direction to fold in, so long as refolding is easy after the person writes something down on it (see Figure 7-1, steps (a)–(b)).

2. Draw a reference point.

Draw a circle in the middle about 25–38 millimetres (1–1.5 inches) in diameter and put a horizontal line from left to right as a reference marker. Your audience member writes on top of that, which allows you to orientate the billet more easily.

3. Ask a volunteer to write or draw something on the paper.

Invite someone to help you out. Hand him a soft pencil and the billet, and ask him to draw something simple or write a word like a name – something he's familiar with but isn't so easy that you can guess it. The reason for using a pencil is to avoid it bleeding through the paper (see Figure 7-1, step (c)).



If the person is going to write a word, ask him to print in English (or whatever your native language is). Say, 'Can you write something down here on this line, perhaps a relative's first name – something in English that I'll understand if we discuss it later. Just print it.' This is to avoid a problem arising later if you can't understand what you read.

4. Ask him to refold the billet and then take it back from him.

Make a point of holding it up and then say, 'If you look now, you can't see anything through the paper. It's perfectly hidden.'

5. Tear the billet.

Hold the billet between your right thumb and index finger, with the centre part of the fold placed in toward your palm so the audience can't see it (see Figure 7-1, step (d)). This section is the part that you tear out, retain and read in a moment.

Firmly grip the billet and tear roughly one-third of the folded paper toward you using your left thumb and index finger, and then downwards. If you do so correctly, you're left with the corner holding the circle in your right hand.

Place the right two-thirds held in your right hand directly on top of the left one-third you just tore with your left hand (see Figure 7-1, step (e)).

Gripping the piece you tore off (now on top) with the remaining billet underneath, tear toward you again, ripping off another third from the packet (see Figure 7-1, step (f)).

Put that newly-torn left packet under the right one (this keeps the centre corner on the top of the stack of torn pieces, which is held by the right hand under the right thumb). Rotate the strips clockwise using your right thumb and index finger as the pivot point at the far right of the packet.

Tear that packet directly in half and put the torn left half under the right. Re-grip with the right hand. As before, the centre remains on top and you can now retain it with the right thumb (see Figure 7-1, step (g)). All you have to do now is transfer the entire packet from your right to your left hand during an offbeat moment when the focus isn't on you and your actions, by sliding the corner off the packet as you take it with your right hand (see Figure 7-1, steps (h)–(i)). Focus your attention on the left hand as you do so and let your right hand nonchalantly fall to your side as you say, 'You can see it's totally torn up and nobody can see a thing.'

6. Burn the billet.

While drawing everyone's attention to the packet in your left hand, reach into your front right pocket and draw out a lighter (this allows you to ditch the corner you retained).

Put the packet in your left hand over an ashtray and light it. Make sure to show the lighter in your right hand and demonstrate that nothing else is there (to convince everyone watching that you really are burning the whole packet). As it begins to burn, turn your head away and say, 'I don't want to look at it as it burns, just in case any of it becomes visible.' Gently drop the packet in the ashtray and put the lighter back in your right front pocket.



At this point, take out the corner and turn completely away from the ashtray, saying, 'Let it burn and when it's completely done, tell me to turn back round.' Sneak a peek at the corner in your hand to see what was written. Trust me when I tell you that everyone's attention is on the ashtray and the burning paper. Don't hurry; just take your time: take a look (see Figure 7-1, step (j)) and then put both of your hands in your front pockets as you're waiting. Ditch the corner in your pocket, turn around and go into a routine of your choice. Hundreds of ways exist to reveal what you learned. Probably the most common is to pretend that you can read the person's mind.

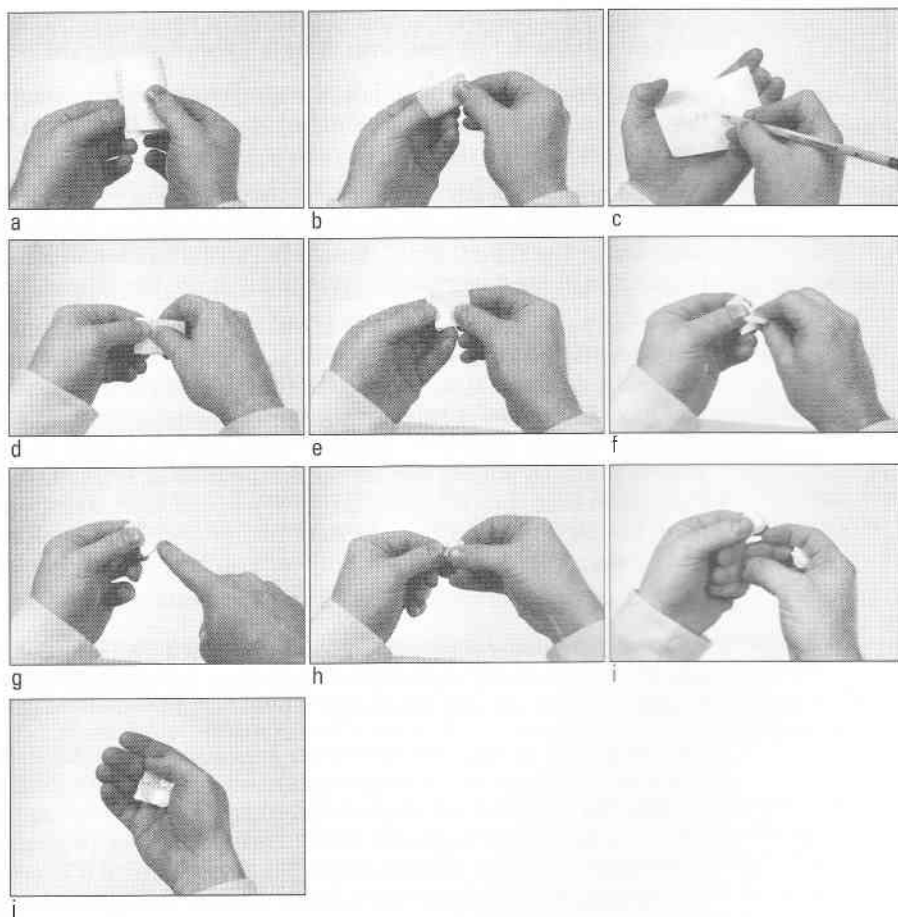


Figure 7-1:
The classic
centre tear.

Conducting the Bernstein centre tear

This technique for obtaining secret information is great because it needs no preparation. You can use it anytime you like with borrowed materials and while totally surrounded by people. According to its inventor, Bruce Bernstein, your hands are totally empty at all times before and after you tear up the billet; you don't have to read any stolen papers on the sly or perform any illogical tear sequences; people can examine all the pieces when torn; you never have to hide or conceal the billet totally; and you don't need any switches, forces, props or secret assistants. That's a tall order, to be sure, but he delivered. Follow these steps – also shown in Figure 7-2:

1. Pre-fold the billet.

You need a 7.5 x 7.5-centimetre (3 x 3-inch) square piece of paper. Fold it in half horizontally and then in half vertically, to create two even creases with four corners.

2. Hand out the billet.

Give the folded billet to someone together with a pen. Turn your back, and ask your volunteer to think of a simple geometric shape, such as a square, and to draw it in the centre of the paper. Then, ask him to print a two-digit number in the middle of that shape and refold the paper.

3. Take the billet.

Hold out your hand showing the billet on all sides. Explain that nobody could possibly see its contents.

The real reason for holding it up is to make sure that the folded centre is on your top right (see Figure 7-2, step (a)).

4. Tear down the middle.

Holding the billet between both hands, tear it directly down the middle away from you (see Figure 7-2, step (b)). Your right hand travels in a circular motion as it tears, out in front of you and then back to your hands. You now have two slips as a result of tearing the billet.

5. Stack the slips.

Place the slip that's in your right hand over the top of the slip in your left hand like a tent, so the one from the right hand completely covers it and is closest to you (see Figure 7-2, step (c)).

6. Turn the slips.

Turn both slips as a single unit clockwise so they're horizontal; the folded centre is now on your far right (see Figure 7-2, steps (d)–(e)).

7. Tear again.

Holding the slips with both hands (see the starting tear position in step (d)), under the cover of your hands, thumb-off the top half by pushing it over to the right. With your right hand again, tear off that half, which contains the crucial centre piece (see Figure 7-2, step (c)).





This movement looks like you've torn the two halves in half yet again (see Figure 7-2, step (g)), creating quarter pieces, but in fact you're going to retain the centre section secretly in the right hand (see Figure 7-2, step (h)) and continue the circular motion as you look for an ashtray or something to deposit the torn pieces in.

8. Separate the ends.

During that motion, simultaneously push forward on the centre slip in your right hand with your right thumb, while your index finger pulls back to spread the ends apart.

9. Clip the slip.

Clip (gently hold) the end of the centre piece between your index and middle fingers, and release it from your thumb. When you do so, the centre flips down behind your fingers, setting up the next movement.

10. Open the slip.

Pull back with your thumb as your fingers push on the now half-opened centre section, which causes it to open more. Time this movement as your right hand is completing the casual circular motion originating with the tear and ending by meeting back at the left hand.



11. Take a glimpse.

As your hands come back together and start to re-grasp the torn slips (as if you're going to execute another tear), your left thumb clips the edge of the nearly opened centre section and pulls it all the way open so you can quickly peek at what's in the centre.

12. Deposit the billet.

Execute the final tears, just ripping everything up as an audience member brings you a requested object to drop the slips into.



The rotation of your right hand tearing away from the left hand, rotating in a circle out and back up to rejoin the left hand, is a smooth, natural, deliberate motion. Don't make a big show of it. The key is to seem almost distracted as you make the movements. You want them to appear to have no purpose whatsoever except exactly what they appear to be – the casual tearing up of the billet so it can't be read.

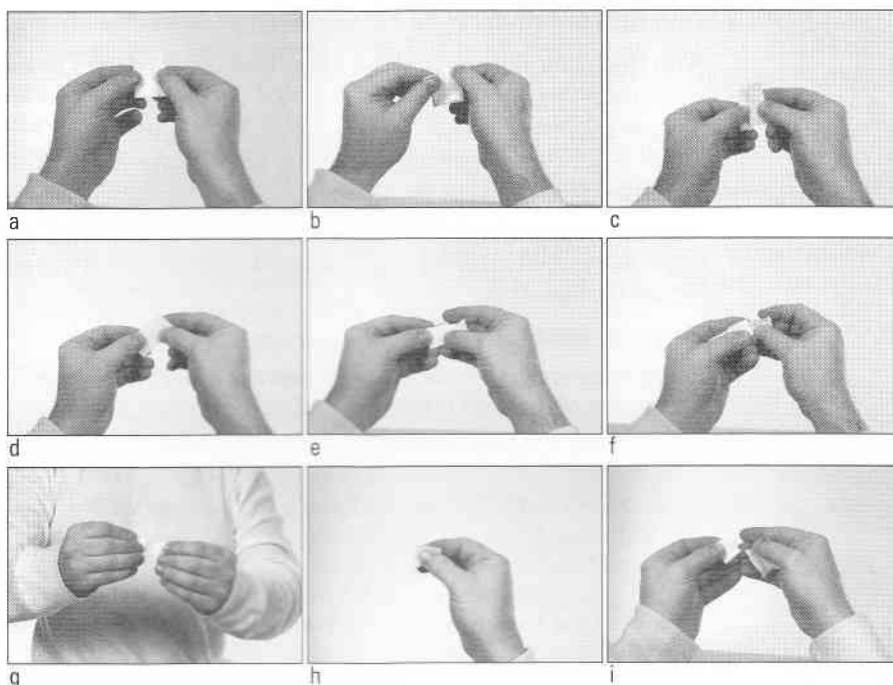


Figure 7-2:
The
Bernstein
centre tear.

Tearing away: The lightning-fast centre tear

When you have the tearing skill (that I describe in the preceding two sections) down, you can tear the centre out of a billet in a nano-second. You can show the papers on all sides and never have to look at your hands during the tear itself.

For this fast tearing effect you need inexpensive, lined 7.5 x 12.5-centimetre (3 x 5-inch) index cards. They're great because you can buy them in all sorts of shops, everyone is familiar with them and they tear easily. All the writing takes place on the blank side (the lines on the opposite side help to conceal anything printed on the reverse). Performed properly, the card's torn to approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ th of its original size – causing an audience to think that you reading anything at all must be utterly impossible. To pull this off, follow these steps: (also shown in Figure 7-3 and Figure 7-4).

1. Fold the card to the right.

With the blank side up, fold the left side of the card over to the right – but leave the edges un-aligned so the folded part nearest you at the top comes over and down a bit over the top of the card farthest from you. The pink line at the top of the card remains visible (see Figure 7-3, step (a)).

2. Turn the card through 90 degrees.

Turn the card clockwise 90 degrees and fold what's now the right side over to the left so that it leaves a lip of about 3 millimetres ($\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch) (see Figure 7-3, step (b)).

3. Rotate it again.

Rotate the index card clockwise 90 degrees again (see Figure 7-3, step (c)). The centre of the card is now located at the bottom right in the corner and you're in the starting position with the billet between your two hands, as seen in the first photos.

Look closely at the folded card and you can see that it has a long side and a short side (see Figure 7-3, step (d)). The short side faces the audience and the long side faces you for the duration of the performance. If you close your eyes to handle the folded card, with practice you can discover how to determine which side is which entirely by feel.

4. Create an identifier.

Ask an audience member to initial the short side of the folded card (see Figure 7-3, step (e)). You use this mark as an identifier during the tearing process.

5. Open the folded card.

Open by turning the short side (the quarter with the initials on it) down and away from you (see Figure 7-3, step (f)). Then, open the whole card from left to right as if you're opening a book from the back cover (see Figure 7-3, step (g)).

6. Draw an 'X'.

Draw an 'X' and a line starting about 2.5 centimetres (1 inch) from the left side of the card, so the line runs just above the middle crease horizontally across the card. Stop 2.5 centimetres (1 inch) from the right side of the card (see Figure 7-3, step (h)).

This space limits where the person writes and helps keep it contained within the centre area of the card that you're going to tear out.

7. Ask a volunteer to write something in upper case letters.

Give him a pen and instruct him to print something on the line and keep it secret. The information needs to be something only that person knows (see Figure 7-3, step (h)).

I like to get the person to write the name of a close friend or relative who's alive but not present at the time; someone for whom the volunteer has deep affection.





Be careful to word things so that the volunteer doesn't write down someone who's passed away. I've made the mistake of not putting any parameters on my instructions, and when I started the presentation and got to the name, my volunteer started crying because she'd written down the name of a good friend who'd died that year. Always be sensitive to the person you're performing for.

8. Ask him to refold the paper.

When he's done so, ask him to hand it back to you. Ensure that his initials are on the outside, facing away from you. Make the first tear toward you, right down the middle vertically (see Figure 7-3, steps (i)–(j)). Place the half in the right hand directly on top of the half in the left hand.

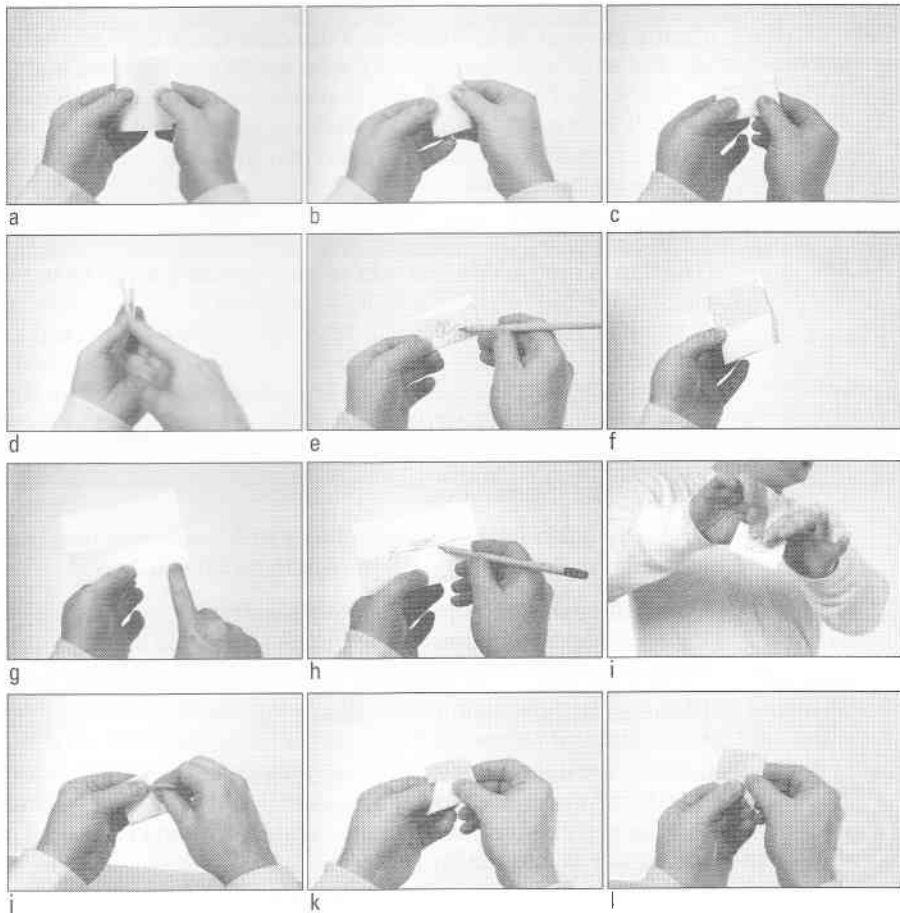


Figure 7-3:
The
lightening-
fast centre
tear part 1.

9. Push upward.

While holding the right corner tightly between the right index finger and thumb, push the first layer of the paper diagonally upward and over to the right (see Figure 7-3, steps (i)–(k)).

Make another tear identical to the first tear you made (see Figure 7-4, steps (a)–(b)), and put the pieces in the right hand on top of the pieces in the left hand (see Figure 7-4, steps (c)–(d)). (A little flap is now on the top.) The hidden information is contained on the opposite side.

The more you stack pieces together, the more difficulty you have executing the tear, which is why thinner but opaque paper is a good choice for these kinds of tearing techniques.



10. Flip and rotate.

Gently lift your right thumb and the card stock springs slightly open so that you can secretly insert your left thumb into the fold (see Figure 7-4, step (e)). Tear off the little flap and the folded piece it's connected to with your right hand just as before, and place it on the pile on the left (see Figure 7-4, steps (f)–(g)). Then, rotate the entire packet counter-clockwise 90 degrees.



11. Peek at the information.

The flap is now inside and you're only one step away from being able to peek at the hidden information. As you ask your volunteer, 'Are you left handed or right handed?', slip your right thumb inside and gently push toward the left (see Figure 7-4, step (h)), while simultaneously pulling the torn pieces slightly to the right. This movement opens up the card and exposes what's been written inside while simultaneously covering the flap (see Figure 7-4, steps (i)–(k)).

12. Destroy the information.

Grasp the main packet of torn pieces with your right hand and tear the information-containing strip of card in half toward you.

Direct the person to open the hand he offered (right or left) and, bringing your hands together, allow the pieces to mix and fall into his palm while you use your fingers to mix things up (see Figure 7-4, step (l)).

Close his hand around the pieces.



When asking a volunteer to write something down, give him a reason for doing so. When I tear the card up, I tell everyone that it represents permanent things and how life can change in an instant – and that when I rip it up, I'm releasing the written words into the universe.

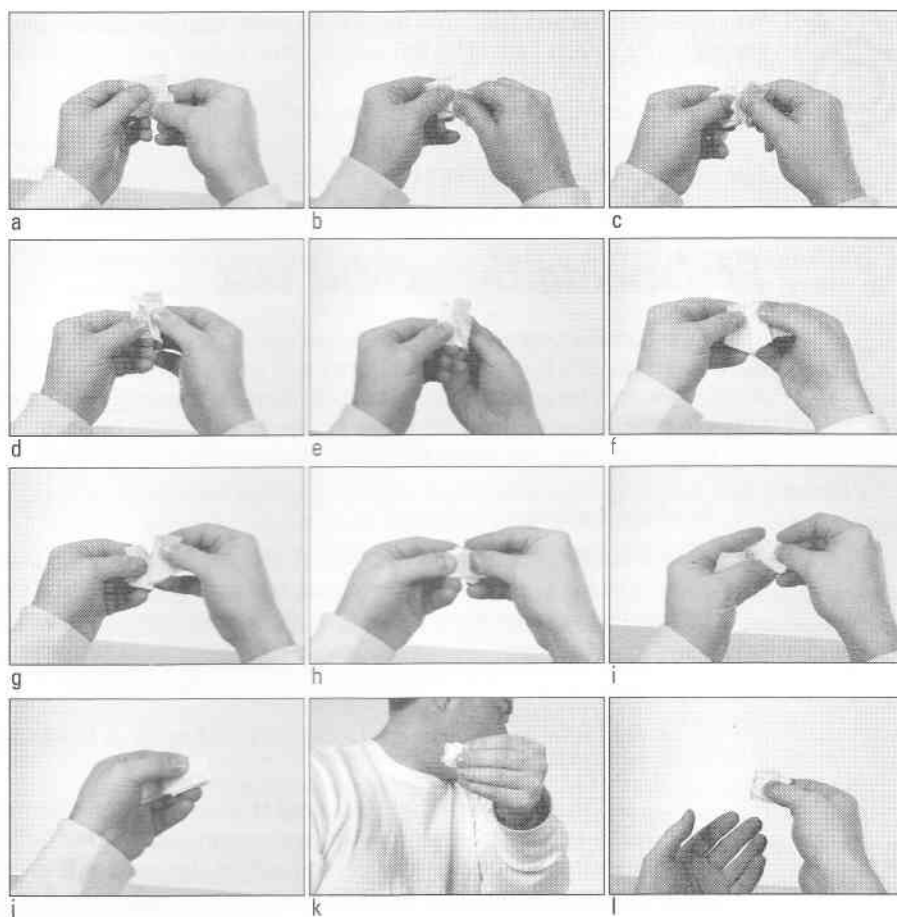


Figure 7-4:
The
lightening-
fast centre
tear part 2.

Glimpsing the Secret

I like to peek. Not in a strange, get arrested, creepy kind of way, I hasten to add! I just love to steal perfectly hidden information from folded business cards or billets right under the noses of people watching everything I do. Call it an obsession, call it crazy, call it bizarre – just don't call it ineffective! This section contains two ways to peek at secrets.



When performing any trick that involves a peek, don't become fixated on what the audience doesn't see. The important thing is how you turn the information you discover from the peek into a performance – not the peek you use to get it. Make your performance timely, moving and dynamic. Care about your audience and share the information in a personal, intimate and seemingly significant and relevant way and you'll always provide a powerful and entertaining experience.

Performing the acidus test

This unassuming way to garner information using a business card was developed in 1979 by Millard Longman and published by the late Al Mann as *Acidus Novus*. The trick involves no switching or dummy billets, and the card stays in plain view. All you need is a business card with one white side and a pen to perform the following steps – also shown in Figure 7-5:

1. Fold the business card.

Take a business card from your wallet and casually show an audience both sides. Ask for a volunteer to help you, and say 'In a moment, I want you to fold this card into quarters, like this.' Give a demonstration as follows:

- Fold the card from right to left and leave a small lip (see Figure 7-5, step (a)).
- Fold it from underneath to create another lip at the top (see Figure 7-5, step (b)).

I tell the audience that I'm doing this so that the volunteer can write on it. An extra layer of protection is provided by all the card folded behind what the person writes that makes it impossible to see even when held up to the light. This explanation helps convince them that you can't get access to what's written down.

The real reason for doing the folds in this way is to allow you to insert your thumb easily into the folded card so that you can steal a peek later (see Figure 7-5, step (d)). The lips also hide the opening from being seen by other people when you're doing so.

The direction of the folds is critical. Most people tend to fold the top down like a tent onto the bottom half – that's incorrect. Make sure that you clearly instruct your volunteer to fold the card from 'right to left, and then underneath' or else you can't peek as instructed. Be sure to watch how the person folds it and correct him if he does it wrong. Putting in deep creases when you initially demonstrate the folds usually ensures that the volunteer folds correctly.



2. Mark with an 'X'.

Open the card up and write an 'X' at the top left margin in the upper left quadrant. You ask your volunteer to refold it in a moment. People are used to seeing that kind of thing as an indicator of where to write on documents such as contracts, marriage licences and speeding tickets, and so it works out well and keeps them in the right spot (see Figure 7-5, step (e)).



Write other things in the other quadrants as well to throw off any suspicion, such as an audience member's year of birth, favourite colour or whatever. You can justify this extra writing as you like. Now, hand the card back and ask your volunteer to print something in that upper left spot. When done, ask him to refold the card as you previously demonstrated, and then take it back from him.

3. Sneak a peek.

Pinch the card tightly and show both sides saying, 'Notice that you can't see through the paper at all.' Hold the card up toward the light at the same time, showing everyone that nothing can be seen through the paper.

If the volunteer has folded the card properly, it resembles an upside-down tent with the lip to your far left and at the top. I call it a 'reserve tent fold' because the bottom quarter folds away from you and upward, which would catch rain if it were a tent. If the card isn't in this position, turn it so it is.



Slip your left thumb in-between the step closest to you on the left side while applying a little pressure with the right thumb. Both your hands briefly cover the card on each side. Do this movement covertly during your patter. Immediately look away and begin tearing the card. This whole action happens in less than a second.



Don't use cards that are too thick or have been laminated – they don't fold or tear well. You want a simple card that's thick enough so anything written down can't be seen through the back. If you decide to use paper instead of business cards, play with different kinds until you find something you like and can handle well.

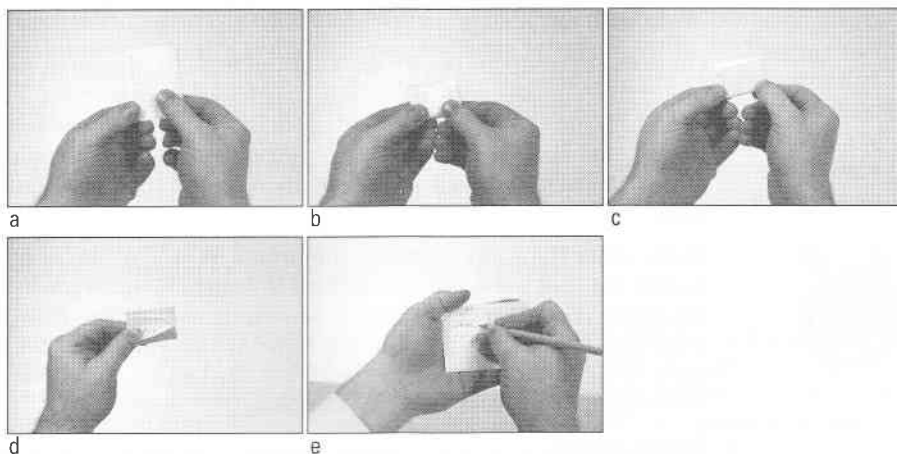


Figure 7-5:
The acidus
test.

Being a Post-it® know-all

The humble canary yellow Post-it® note is as common today as staples, paper clips and ballpoint pens. What makes this piece of stationery unique is the strip of repositionable glue on the back that allows notes to be attached to just about anything and removed without leaving marks or residue (and how useful the notes can be for mentalists!). To perform this trick, follow these steps – also shown in Figure 7-6:

1. Orientate the pad.

Get yourself a pad of Post-it® notes, remove the backing sheet to reveal the sticky side (the back) and place it on a table with the strip of glue at the top, running horizontally from left to right (in other words, the normal orientation most people use to write on a pad of Post-it® notes)

2. Draw the quadrants.

Draw a line vertically in the middle – from the top to the bottom. Then, draw a line across the middle horizontally. These lines create four quadrants or boxes that you can write in (see Figure 7-6, step (a)).

3. Fill the boxes.

Leave the top left and top right boxes open. In the bottom left and bottom right, write whatever you want (see Figure 7-6, step (b)).

4. Ask a volunteer to write something.

Hand a volunteer the pad and ask him to write his favourite number in the top right quadrant and his favourite colour in the top left quadrant.

5. Ask your volunteer to fold the pad.

Instruct him to lift off (gently) the upper left corner of the pad and fold the whole left side over to the right as if he's closing a book (to leave half of a sticky strip at the top) (see Figure 7-6, step (c)).

Now get him to fold the bottom of the note upward toward the top, covering the sticky section and creating a quarter-size note (see Figure 7-6, step (d)). Tell him to leave it attached and to hold out the pad.

6. Peek at the number.

Reach over and with your right thumb grip what is now the top left of the folded note (to him, it's the lower right) at the folded point. Casually keep your index, middle and ring fingers together (also called 'windows' in magic vernacular) so he can't see into your hand, and grab the front of the folded note – pulling the entire thing toward you.

As you do so, a gap is created (see Figure 7-6, step (e)). Gently insert your thumb inside and push downward to open up the gap. Simultaneously, close your hand around the note so that it gets pushed into your folded fingers. Done properly, in one smooth motion, you can pull it right off the pad and open it up in your hand and get a peek.

When you're able to see the number (written upside down) and colour, immediately turn away, bring your hands together and start tearing up the note.

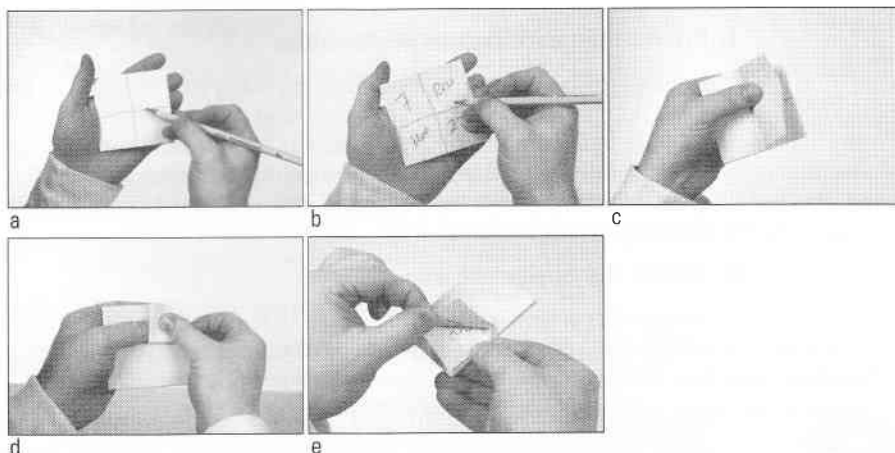


Figure 7-6:
The Post-it®
and know it
trick.

Producing Funny Business from Your Wallet

To the idealistic mentalist who supports the mantra ‘pack small, play big’, being able to perform with nothing more than a pen and what you carry in your wallet is an attractive idea. Knowing some solid techniques, methods and tricks for working with business cards is thus a no-brainer.

Flicking the switch

You can accomplish almost any trick in mentalism by using a *switch* – exchanging a card, billet or whatever with one you’ve prepared earlier. In this section, I demonstrate the ‘switch and read’ method; it’s a lot like a peek, except you can’t do it on the fly, it isn’t as fast and you have to hide the action of reading the information by doing something to distract attention from it.

Don’t let the difficulties put you off, though, because the switch gives you access to a lot more information than a standard peek method. All you need is a pen or pencil, two business cards, a lighter, an ashtray or glass – and some nerve. Here’s how to use a switch to read someone’s mind – also shown in Figure 7-7:

1. Pre-fold the card before performing.

Holding the business card horizontally, blank side facing you, fold it in half from right to left as though you’re closing an open book. Then fold the entire thing in half from the bottom upwards away from you (as with the trick in the earlier section ‘Performing the acidus test’ but without the lips. Make sure that the creases are right and store the card in your wallet for later (see Figure 7-7, steps (a)–(b)).

2. Switch the business cards.

You perform this trick sitting down in front of a table. Reach into your wallet and pull out the pre-folded card (secretly) and another unfolded one that you’re going to hand out to a volunteer.

Finger-palm the pre-folded card in your right hand between the first and third joints of your middle and ring fingers; the position needs to resemble an inverted ‘V’ or tent fold. The spine of the longest side should be running parallel to your fingers, nearly touching your index finger, with the opening closest to your little finger. Depending on the size of your hands, you may have to modify this positioning a bit. (See Figure 7-7, step (c)) Fold the volunteer’s card in exactly the same way directly in front of the audience and then give it to the volunteer.



3. Ask the volunteer to write something.

Ask him to open the folded business card that you just gave him and print any words he likes on the blank side: a name, an address, some intimate fact only he knows or whatever (see Figure 7-7, step (d)). Your imagination controls the exact direction of this trick.

4. Take back the card.

Instruct him to refold the card and hand it back to you. Take it with your left hand and hold it at your fingertips (see Figure 7-7, step (e)).

Simultaneously, gently release the pressure on the palmed card to allow it to open.

Bring your two hands together (see Figure 7-7, steps (f)–(h)), with the left card in the inverted 'V' position, and nonchalantly slide it into the palmed card about one-third the length of the card, as if the blank one was stacked on top of the other one sitting on a table.

To the audience, you appear to have passed the card over to the other hand, which is why you want to keep it at your fingertips as much as possible.

At first, you may find that the two cards collide during practice; just keep working on it until you can execute the move seamlessly.

Reach over with the left hand and take back the pencil and slide it close to you on the table; this subtly justifies or demonstrates your motivation for switching hands, without saying a word.



5. Transfer cards.

After suitable patter, transfer the two cards as a single unit from your right hand to your left hand, and then finger-palm the written-on card and hold it in place with your thumb.

Done correctly, the pre-prepared blank card should be at your fingertips in plain view now. I've done this action countless times and nobody has ever seen a thing. The transfer happens almost instantly and the 'card' is only out of view for a nano-second.



6. Destroy the pre-prepared card.

Look around and motion to a spectator saying, 'Uhhh, here. Can you hold this for a second? Just hold it at your fingertips and keep it closed.' Do this almost as an afterthought, as if you're trying to decide what to do with the card and need someone's help for a second.

As that's happening, bring your left hand toward your lap and drop the written-on card in it. Reach into your pocket and pull out a lighter with your left hand. Take back the blank card from the person helping you with your right hand, and light it.



As the blank card burns in your outstretched right fingers, casually drop your left hand back to your lap with the lighter in it and nonchalantly open the written-on card.

I bring the left hand with the lighter in and out of play from my lap area a few times as I'm talking, gesturing with my hands. This move keeps any heat (so to speak) off the lighter and left hand. The whole time, the written-on business card is open to be read whenever you're ready.

7. Glimpse the card.

Let the blank card burn down as much as possible, without burning yourself, and then drop it into an ashtray or glass to finish. Bring the lighter up and put it on the table. Here's where a little acting takes you a long way.

Close your eyes, slightly nod your head and pretend to concentrate. Bring your left hand up empty from the table, with your eyes still closed, and rest your head into it so your entire left eye is covered. The middle, ring and little fingers of the left hand should cradle the bridge of your nose, which creates the impression that you're totally focused.



Keep your right eye tightly closed, and look down at your lap with your left eye to read the card. This technique is called the *gypsy glimpse* and works perfectly. To everyone watching, you seem to be focused on the task and concentrating. When you've read everything, bring your left hand back down to the table and rest it on the lighter. Keep your eyes closed for a few more seconds, raise your head and open your eyes.

Grab the lighter, drop your hand back into your lap and lean forward into the table. Prop your right elbow on the table as you shift your weight forward. While doing so, with your left hand fold up the written-on card in your lap up and palm it, and then put the lighter in front of it between your fingers.

Talk for a few moments, and then lean back in your chair. While all this movement is happening, engage the person who did the writing in a very normal conversation using whatever patter you like. When you're ready, bring the left hand up with the lighter exposed and deposit it and the hidden card into your inside jacket pocket.

8. Reveal your knowledge.

At this point you're clean and can reveal what you know in a manner consistent with your performing persona (I describe this subject in Chapter 2).

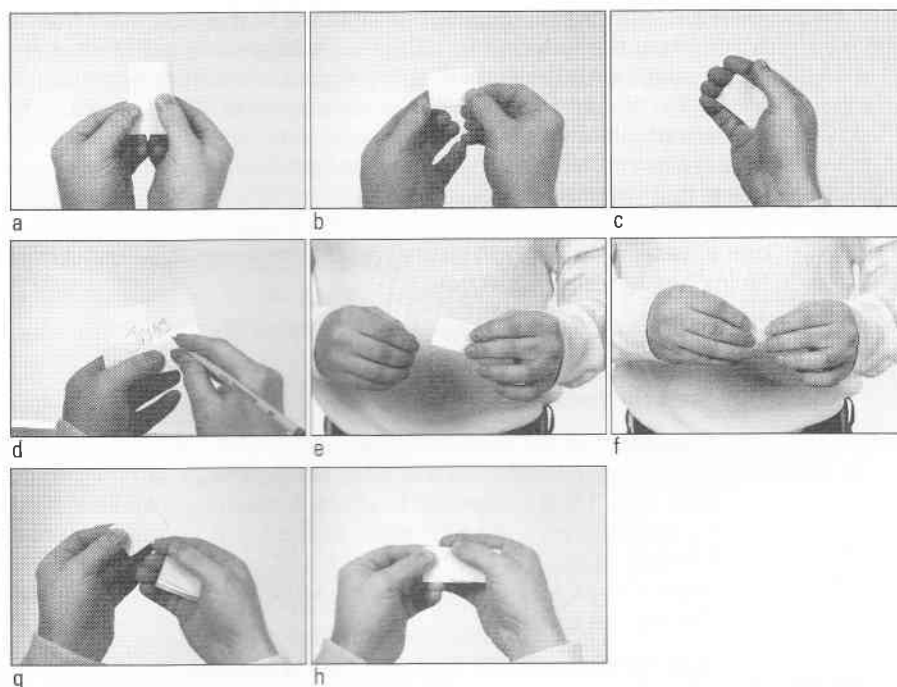


Figure 7-7:
The switch
trick.

Gaining power with close-up Q and A

Performers consider the perfect *Question and Answer* routine to be the Holy Grail of mentalism. The power and appeal lie in its long history (going back to Ancient Greece and the Oracle of Delphi).

The Effect: The mentalist invites someone to write down an intimate question about his future that he wants answered. After connecting with the oneness of the universe, the mentalist offers amazing insights based on the question.

The Secret: You guessed it – you use a peek to expose the needed information. I suggest using the peeking technique that I describe earlier in the ‘Performing the acidus test’ section.

The Performance: The concept of this trick is that you put a question to the world, trust the universe to reflect back an answer and then share those impressions with the audience. My suggested patter plays along with this idea. 'Psychic' performers usually pretend to be just a 'conduit' for the information, which allows them to share general, vague, kind and gentle things that are unverifiable and generally palatable.



In my presentation of this trick, instead of a question I specifically ask someone to write a single word only – one that represents the most important issue facing him in his life right now.

Follow these steps:

1. Start the routine.

Casually pull out your wallet and a pen and put them on the table in front of you. Produce a white-backed business card and fold it into quarters. Say, 'I feel compelled to share something with you.' You're going to write the person's first name in the top right quadrant of the card, his year of birth in the bottom left and his zodiac symbol in the bottom right. You're also going to get the volunteer to write the hidden word in the top left quadrant.

You can perform this trick in all sorts of ways and what follows are just my own suggestions and patter.

Begin by saying, 'What's your name, please, the very first gift your parents gave you when you were born?' Write his first name in the top right quadrant.

'Forgive me for asking, but what year were you born – just the last two digits, please? This tells me a lot about you.' Write those two digits in the bottom left quadrant.

Talk about the chosen year, such as what you were doing at the time, who the prime minister was and any newsworthy or nostalgic facts from that year (if you know them).



Memorising major facts and trivia for every birth year from 1940 to the present day is really useful because you can easily pick out things that people recognise. This knowledge is particularly useful for cold reading (which I cover in Chapter 13).

Ask for the person's astrological sign and write down whatever he says in the lower right quadrant.

To bring things together, say, 'I now know quite a lot of information about you that will help me home in on some other things.' Point to the remaining empty top left quadrant, saying, 'This space represents where a person's heart is – in the upper left side of your body. Please think of a question that you'd like answered about your future but, instead of writing a whole sentence, pick a single powerful word that represents that question. The word should describe an important issue, event or anything weighing heavily on your mind. But don't tell me what it is, just print it here and refold the card like this.'

Tap the top left quadrant, emphasise the word 'print', demonstrate how to fold the card again and hand it over. Turn your back while he does so and only turn round after he's finished.

2. Retake the card.

Hold the card up to the light or toward the sun. Reposition it so that you can get the peek and say, 'You see; you can't see through the card at all. Correct?'



Bring the card down to your eye level, slip your thumb in, get the peek and close it up again. By holding it up at eye level, you can look right at the person and at the card at the same time. To anyone watching, you appear to have looked over the card.

Turn your head and begin tearing up the card. Say, 'Put these pieces in your hand and keep it closed so nobody can see inside. We put your thoughts and details on the card to represent the here and now, and I tore them up to represent the fact that life is ever changing. By tearing your question up, it releases it into the air to be met by the spiritual realms. This is a ritual practice that's thousands of years old.'

3. Deliver with style.

Use what you know for certain – the word, year of birth and zodiac symbol – to have some fun before revealing the word itself.

Say something like, 'I'd like very much for you to focus on the word and what it means to you right now, but please don't say anything to me about it unless I ask you a specific question. I want you to see it in your mind.'

Of course, your precise patter varies with the person, but for now assume that the word is 'love' (a common enough concern). Now continue with, 'I get the impression this has to do with the heart. Not the actual heart, but it has to do with a relationship?' The person almost certainly affirms what you've said. You know that the word most likely concerns a current relationship, a previous one or a desired on. Your goal is to home in on it by asking gently probing questions.



You can say, 'This is very deep and personal, isn't it?' If he answers positively, reflect back. Say, 'Yes, I can see that. It's calling out to me very loudly. I can feel the depth of meaning in this word.'

The patter is the essence of this routine – it's a conversation that you can direct based on the person's responses. People love to talk about themselves when they feel comfortable with you and always respond to a sympathetic approach. Just validate the person and show empathy. Evaluate the person: what he's wearing, how he's holding himself, how he responds to what you're asking and so on. Incorporate what you're able to discover, what you found out from the peek and what you know about people in general into the conversation. Done properly, the trick involves you giving someone the opportunity to feel heard.

I try to hit on something, ask open-ended questions and then shut up – except to nod or say things like, 'I see. Yes. And what else? Tell me more.'

Psychotherapists lead conversations in this way all the time. They just sit there and let patients talk. Do what the experts do. Trust me, your volunteer will respond to your gentle probing. Using nothing more than free association, this trick is interpersonal communication at its best.

Making a Great Impression (in Two Ways)

To peek at something, mentalists sometimes make secret copies of items to help them out.

An *impression device* is a prop that secretly duplicates anything written on it by creating a direct 'impression' of the original that you can then peek. Such devices are generally very innocent looking and can be purpose-built or produced by modifying something that already exists, such as a clipboard, notepad, diary, day-planner and so on:

- ✓ **Gimmicked clipboard:** Without a doubt, the clipboard is the most commonly available commercial product used by mentalists to make impression devices. I've obtained over 15 different ready-made gimmicked versions and made another seven different ones myself.
- ✓ **Carbon paper:** Mentalists have been using carbon and carbonless duplicating copy paper since it was first invented because it makes a perfect copy of any original handwritten document. If you place a piece of standard paper on top of a piece of copy paper that's put on top of another piece of standard paper, any mark you make on the top with a ballpoint pen or pencil is replicated. You can hide it just about anywhere; only your imagination limits its use (flip to Chapter 10 for an effect using carbonless paper).

- ✓ **Magnetic paper:** You're probably familiar with the magnetic writing toys that have been in circulation since the 1970s. The internal display comprises a lattice of small hexagons, each filled with iron particles in a suspension. When a magnet is drawn across the reticulated screen, the iron particles become visible. Hidden under other paper and using a pen with a magnet hidden inside the tip, the magnetic paper will capture what's written above it.
- ✓ **Magic slate:** This common children's toy is a writing tablet that you can draw on and then clear the image by lifting the top sheet. If you rub or write on the tablet with anything – pen, pencil, fingernail – the film sticks to the wax and forms an image.
- ✓ **ePaper:** First developed in the 1970s, electronic paper and electronic ink refer to any of a variety of technologies that mimic the look of ink and paper (many commercial eBook readers use the technology). Although currently still in its infancy in terms of commercial use, I foresee some real mentalist possibilities for this technology in the future.
- ✓ **Electronic clipboard:** You can buy electronic versions of impression devices that beam what's been written on them to a monitor via Bluetooth or a radio frequency. They cost between several hundred to several thousand pounds, but they can be less dependable than manual methods because of their reliance on power supplies and the possibility of external interference.

Other pre-show prep

Before a show, and perhaps even during intermissions, you can obtain a lot of useful information that you can work into some pretty exciting tricks if you're resourceful enough. Although this approach isn't peeking as such, it's a great way to steal a surreptitious glimpse at useful information.

Think of yourself as a spy trying to collect 'the skinny' on your audience. You can plant hidden cameras in the lobby or listening devices at tables, get an assistant to walk around with a gimmicked clipboard asking people to fill out forms (which they keep but you now have a copy of) or even get employees to feed you

personal information about the CEO of a corporate gig you're doing. Nothing is technically off limits, so long as you obey the law. I've used a voice recorder disguised as a ballpoint pen to capture a discussion after I've left the room, and then used the collected info in my show.

A television evangelist in the 1980s collected people's 'prayer cards' and then used what was written on them as part of his 'show': he declared that God was revealing these needs supernaturally. A well-known TV psychic sends assistants to collect the household rubbish of people who have booked to see his show – because you never know what you may find!

Chapter 8

Touching without Touching: The Tantalising World of Telekinesis

In This Chapter

- ▶ Bending spoons with your mind
- ▶ Curling other cutlery
- ▶ Touching without touching
- ▶ Moving objects from a distance

Sceptics and psychics have been hotly debating one question for many years: can people manipulate solid objects, such as bending metal spoons, forks and coins, without touching them and solely with the mind? Psychics claim 'yes', sceptics state 'no' and mentalists say 'yes' but only by cheating!

In this chapter, I show you step-by-step how to perform these kinds of cool illusions and apparently bend both spoons and the rules of physics. Soon you too can be ruining kitchen equipment and other household implements left, right and centre!

Bending Cutlery: Spooning Leads to Forking

In the 1970s, people started 'bending' spoons only with the power of thought as an apparent way to demonstrate their *psychokinetic* (PK) or *telekinetic* abilities. Performers such as Uri Geller made such performances popular with their television appearances, and in no time at all, everyone was doing it. Today, cutlery bending is a common mentalism trick.

Bending parties

When I think of going to a social gathering, I'm looking forward to visiting friends, enjoying good company, listening to some killer music and maybe drinking the occasional Long Island Ice Tea – I'm not thinking about awakening my 'psychic' abilities. But that's exactly how parties would pan out in the 1980s. Groups of like-minded people interested in all things New Age would get together in some suburb, nibble on finger food and talk about their pony-tails, Greenpeace and how Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were screwing up the world. After a suitable introduction to the hostess, who'd always known she was a psychic,

loads of spoons were brought out and the real party began.

After the partygoers each took possession of their own piece of cutlery, the host guided them through a variety of rituals and chants; they were often encouraged to yell loudly at the spoons to 'bend!' over and over again, to jump up and down and otherwise create utter pandemonium.

Unfortunately, sceptics and scientists were always excluded from these parties, and so claims that spoons bent without any physical assistance from their owners always surfaced – but could never be verified.

Choosing the best brand

As you aren't really going to bend metal spoons with your mind (you did guess that, I hope!), you need something that can bend easily. I recommend that you stay away from your mother-in-law's fine silverware and instead, try a cheaper brand because the individual pieces are likely to be pretty pliable. Buy a lot.

Weakening the cutlery: Scoring and fatiguing



Weakening the arm or handle of a spoon before a performance is an important way to limit the number of times you need to manipulate it physically in front of a spectator, especially if you want to end a spoon-bending routine with a 'flick break' or 'bowl drop' (as I describe in the later section 'Throwing in an optional extra: The bowl drop') to create the illusion of the end melting off. I always score one utensil before I perform.

Here's how to score a piece of cutlery. Grip it between your hands – the bowl in your left hand and the arm in your right. Bring your hands together and bend it in half, and then back, and then repeat. Try to stay close to the bowl

at the top of the arm. If you do this action fast enough, the utensil starts to get pretty hot – so be careful.



Don't do this process too many times because the fork or spoon may subsequently break without any effort. When done correctly, you can smack it flat against a table or your hand a couple of times as a convincer. I ruined a lot of spoons getting the scoring just right and you'll probably do the same. Just keep practising.

Influencing metal with the push bend

This trick is the perfect bend for when you're given two perfectly normal, unbent pieces of cutlery at a party or restaurant. This method is really simple and allows you to make a chosen spoon bend in someone's hand.



If you happen to have your own spoons with you, or had the chance to score one that you may be able to use first, use it here instead of one that's untouched. The reason is that if you do the bends in the sequence I describe below, you can end with a killer finish. Trust me, just keep reading.

Here's what you do – also shown in Figure 8-1:

1. **Display two spoons in your hands.** Hold one spoon in each hand lightly at your fingertips.
2. **Compare them.** Place one spoon on top of the other. The goal is to show everyone that the spoons are the same and contain no bends. If you prefer, you can ask members of your audience to do it in their own hands and then take them back after they've had the chance to examine the spoons.
3. **Prepare for the push bend.** Put a spoon in each hand again, but this time place your right thumb at the base of the bowl of the spoon in that hand, and take a firmer grip on the arm. Try to keep the appearance of a light grip.

When bending metal, you need to appear to be using no strength at all to do so.

Brilliant thinking from a brilliant mind

My good friend Morgan Strebler is one of the best illusionists I've ever met in regards to bending spoons and forks. He's truly set the standard

for all others to follow; he's even developed the habit of shaking people's hands lightly, just to create the impression of weakness.



4. **Turn and push bend.** A concept in magic says that a larger movement covers (conceals) a smaller movement. In this case, you face the person you're performing for, so imagine that you're on her right, just ever so slightly to your left side in terms of proximity. Being up close for these types of tricks is best. I tend to turn a little left and a little right as I explain things and talk about the utensils to set up the idea that this movement is normal when I communicate. You can also set it up so that if any other people are on your right, you can turn towards them to include them in what you're saying. To do the bend, turn clockwise and, at the same time, push the bowl of the spoon over. Do so in one smooth, continuous movement.



Don't stand still during bends or you get caught; you need to move as you do this bend. The moment you complete the bend, go back to a light grip.

5. **Force the spectator's choice.** Following the bend, ask the spectator to point to one of the spoons. Given that she's just examined the spoons a moment before, she assumes that everything is still normal. No matter which spoon she points out, you give her the one you just bent. If she points to the left, put that one down and say, 'Okay, we'll eliminate that one.' If she chooses the one in your right hand say, 'Perfect, we'll use this one.' Put the other spoon down.

6. **Ask the spectator to bend the spoon.** Grip the bent spoon so that the spectator won't notice that the spoon's already bent. Instruct her to place one hand palm up and the other over it palm down. Slide the bent spoon in on top of her palm-up hand and gently bring her top hand down to cup it. Say, 'Okay, close your hands gently – I don't want you to use any force to bend it. I just want you to concentrate on the spoon. I want you to think in your mind "bend" and gently rub your hand backwards and forwards over the spoon; just lightly touch it.' Mimic the movement with your own hands.



You don't have to do this bend in someone else's hands – you can just do it in your own. However, the trick is much more powerful when you involve a spectator.

7. **Reveal the bend.** After a suitable build-up, ask your volunteer to slowly bring her top hand off and say, 'Look at that . . . you did it. It's clearly bent.' Bring up the other spoon and place the bent one directly on top of the non-bent spoon; the bend is very obvious. Now hand the spoons out for inspection; I assure you, your audience wants to see them!

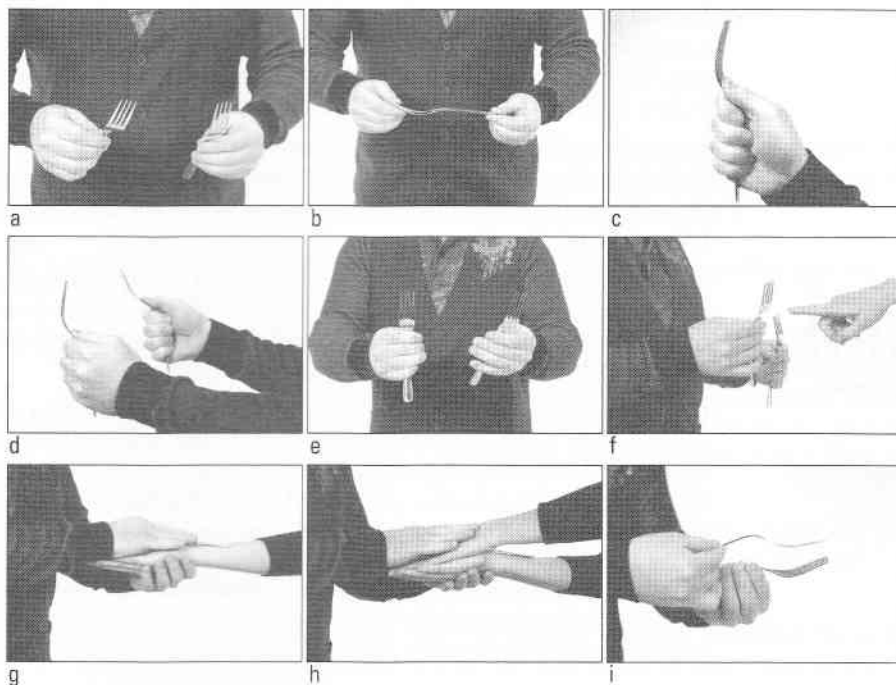


Figure 8-1:
The push
bend.

Bending spoons upwards

Using a bend to cover a bend is a great tool in the mentalist's toolbox. The upward bend that I show you in this section is best accomplished immediately after your audience has inspected an unbent spoon. To build upon the push bend from the preceding section, continue to draw your audience's attention to the bent spoon and take back the unbent one. This trick is easy and happens almost instantly. Follow these steps – also illustrated in Figure 8-2:

- 1. Grasp the spoon.** Hold the unbent spoon in your right hand, thumb up, in an almost 'shovel' position. Make a fist with your left hand while simultaneously bringing the spoon over to meet it. Place the bowl under your left thumb, on top of the padded part of the curled forefingers.
- 2. Get ready to bend.** Your thumb and curled forefingers of your right hand need to be touching the thumb and curled forefingers of your left hand, right where the arm of the spoon begins to turn into the bowl.
- 3. Bend the spoon.** To create the bend, apply downward pressure with both of your thumbs at the same time. You may well be surprised at how deep a bend you can make in the heat of the moment. When the spoon is bent, smoothly transition into a light grip in your right hand, and hide the bent arm behind your forefingers.



4. **Reveal the bend.** Now's the time for a little acting. This part takes only a couple of seconds. Get the audience's attention with, 'Hey, check this out. Watch. I'll take this unbent spoon and see if I can do something with it, too. It doesn't always work. But I'll try.'

As you're talking, take the spoon from your right hand by grasping the end of it with your left thumb and index finger; use a nice solid grip. Keep it pointed directly at the audience and do it quickly or else they can see that it's bent.

Your right hand needs to move up and cover the spoon right away. Do this movement so that the thumb of your right hand is pointing back towards your solar plexus, with your left hand holding the spoon by the end so that it's pointing directly in front of you.

Gently stroke the entire spoon from the bowl up to the tips of the fingers of your right hand – rapidly. I tend to open the fingers (also called *windows* in magic) of my right hand a bit so that anyone watching can see through them and catch a glimpse of the action happening underneath. They can't really see anything, but the action gives the impression that nothing is hidden. Repeat this forward-and-backward motion across the length of the spoon four or five times, rapidly at first, but gradually slowing, whilst simultaneously tilting the wrist of your left hand upwards to create the illusion that the spoon is bending in an upward motion.

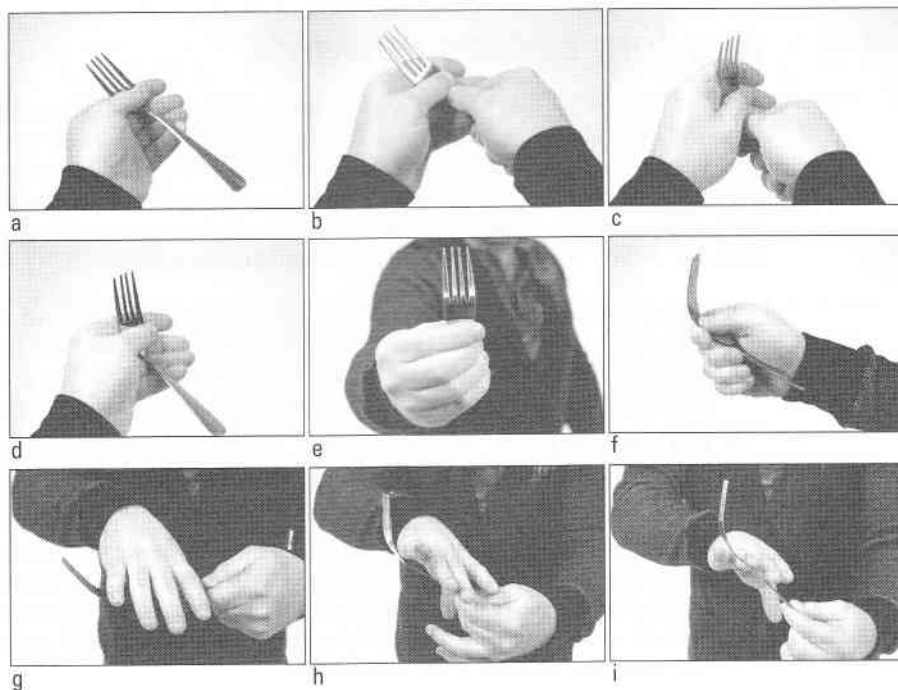


Figure 8-2:
The upward
bend.

Throwing in an optional extra: The bowl drop

In this section, I demonstrate an added extra that I like to use at the close of a cutlery-bending routine. I presume that you're working through the routine I describe in the two preceding sections. Now follow these steps:

1. **Score a spoon.** Follow the process that I discuss in the earlier section 'Weakening the cutlery: Scoring and fatiguing'.
2. **Grasp the end of the spoon.** You have one spoon with a deep bend in it already in your hand. (See Figure 8-3.) Let everyone see that spoon, and retake the previously bent one (the one you use for the push bend in the earlier 'Influencing metal with the push bend' section) and firmly grab it at the end. Give the audience a moment to take in the spoon that they're now looking at.
3. **Smack the spoon.** As a convincer, smack the scored spoon firmly on your hand a couple of times. But be careful not to knock the bowl off by accident.
4. **Rub the spoon bowl gently.** Grip the bowl in your left hand and the arm in your right. You've already scored the end near the bowl, and so it's pretty weak. To get it really soft and pliable, move it around gently, ever so slightly, so that it begins to get warm. Don't strain or put any noticeable effort into the action.

Just say to your audience, 'Alright, let me try something else. You've all examined this spoon. Let me see if I can make it soft.'

Put a little bend into the spoon by holding the bowl firmly and rotating the arm in a bit of a circle. Then, gently stroke it with the index finger of your left hand right where the scoring is, and go back to rotating it. Do this motion very softly so that it appears to take no effort at all.

5. **Let the end fall off.** You can feel the spoon getting weaker. When it's almost ready to break, ask someone to put her hands together in a cup; you start manipulating the spoon over her hands. Then, gently flick the spoon and it breaks off. As it does, let it fall right into the person's hands. If you want to keep the spoon together for a more dramatic effect, pinch the scored area with your index finger and thumb so that, when it does break, you can act as though it hasn't and slowly release pressure to make it appear to bend and fall at an angle until you allow it to drop totally off.

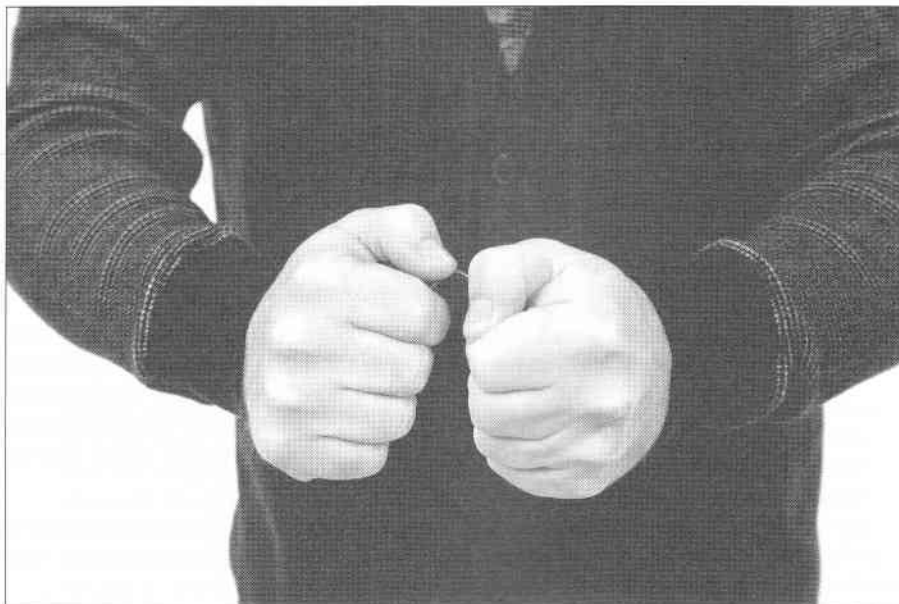


Figure 8-3:
Gripping the
end of the
spoon.

Fooling Around with Forks

Most mentalists I know start out bending spoons, but before long they get a bit more adventurous, a bit more excited and move on to forking. Quite honestly, the move is a natural progression as you develop as a mentalist.

Carrying out the tine bend

The best thing about forks, besides being able to eat with them, is that they have four or five extra things to bend. And, tines are much easier to bend than any other part of a fork. Like other moves, tine-bending is done under the cover of a larger action – you bend it as you bring the fork back into your body or during a gesture of some kind:

- 1. Prepare for the bend.** Grip the fork with your right hand, the thumb against the top of the fork at the base near the arm, with the index finger curled underneath. Make your hand into a fist with the fork's arm squarely in your palm (as Figure 8-4, step (a) shows).



Remember, forks may have more things to play with and bend, but the tines are made to pierce all the food that humans shuffle into their faces. As a result, the tines are pointed and sharp, and with a little pressure they can easily puncture your fingers if you're not careful. Nothing says 'ta da' like bleeding all over the place! Never bend a tine by placing direct pressure on its end. Always bend it by applying pressure just under the end: it's safer that way.

2. **Bend the tine.** Place your left thumb on the top of the tine farthest to the left without allowing it to hang over the end. Ensure that your left index finger is curled under the tine and slightly against the back side of the fork itself near your right index finger. To bend the tine, simply push firmly away from you.
3. **Reveal the bent tine.** In Chapter 1, I write about optical illusions. Well, the best way to reveal the tine bend is to fool the brain of the audience by using motion. In this case, you use a type of optical illusion (technically called a *stimulus distortion illusion*) to make the tine appear to be bending in front of your audience. For how this illusion works, take a look at the nearby sidebar 'Deceiving an audience's sight'.

Grip the fork about two finger widths from the bottom, and pinch it between your forefingers – lightly (as shown in Figure 8-4, step (b)). That little extra space allows a better pivot point, and the loose grip allows the fork to really get going.

Deceiving an audience's sight

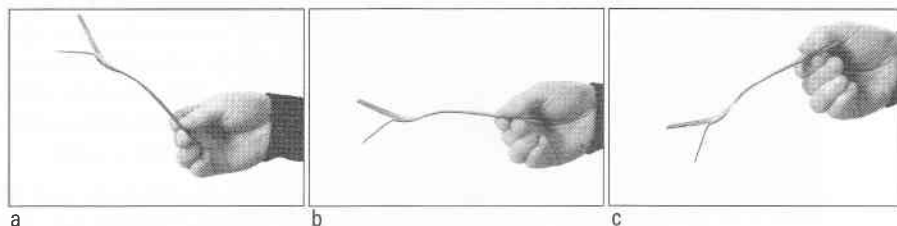
Think back to your school days. Can you remember people putting a pencil between their fingers and then rapidly shaking it so that it looks like the pencil is made of rubber? Obviously, the pencil is solid, but it *looks* as if it's bending. This optical illusion is caused by a measurable lag between what the eye captures and the brain sees. Because people's eyes are constantly moving, focusing and sending information to their brains, they can't capture what's called *stroboscopic motion* in the same way they do slower motion. You may think that your eyes are seeing things 'instantly', but they're not.

The easiest way to understand this situation is to think about motion pictures, which are so-called because what's in fact being projected onto the screen is a series of photograph stills that are run together at 24 frames per second or higher. The human eye can't pick up each individual frame at that speed, and so the film seems to be moving. The same happens if you wave a pencil, or a fork with a bent tine, directly in front of someone's face at speed. By moving the fork, the wrist and the arm in unison, and then slowly decreasing that movement, the fork can appear to be bending right in front of an audience.

The movement starts at your fingertips, moves into the wrist and then the arm at the elbow. A lot of movement is involved at first, and then it begins to slow. Everything stops in reverse; you clamp down harder on the fingers, slow down the wrist and then the arm. As that process takes place, you're also twisting slightly counter-clockwise so that the perspective and view of the fork changes too. As that happens, the audience starts to see the bend. (See Figure 8-4, step (c).)

If they don't, just point at the tine with your index finger and say, 'Can you see that? Look at the tine . . . it's bending!' The whole action is about timing: like all things, practise this trick in front of the mirror until you get it right.

Figure 8-4:
Forking
around.



Performing the corkscrew

You need to perform only two movements to produce this amazing bend.



This illusion is advanced stuff and requires some practice to get right. The end result is worth it, though. At first, the requirements look completely impossible and as though nobody will be able to straighten the fork back up – not even the world's strongest man.

1. **Grip the fork.** Do so just as if you were going to score it (check out the earlier section 'Weakening the cutlery: Scoring and fatiguing') and bend it cleanly in half. If you do it properly, your hands end with your thumbs up, little fingers down, wrists near each other. The position looks a bit like you've been handcuffed.
2. **Twist the fork.** With your hands still in the 'handcuffed' position, you now do two things simultaneously. Tighten your grip as if you're hanging on for dear life from a skyscraper and rotate both hands as a unit; your right hand turns counter-clockwise and your left hand turns clockwise. These two moves need to be done at precisely the same moment.

See Figure 8-5 for exactly how to grip and twist your fork.

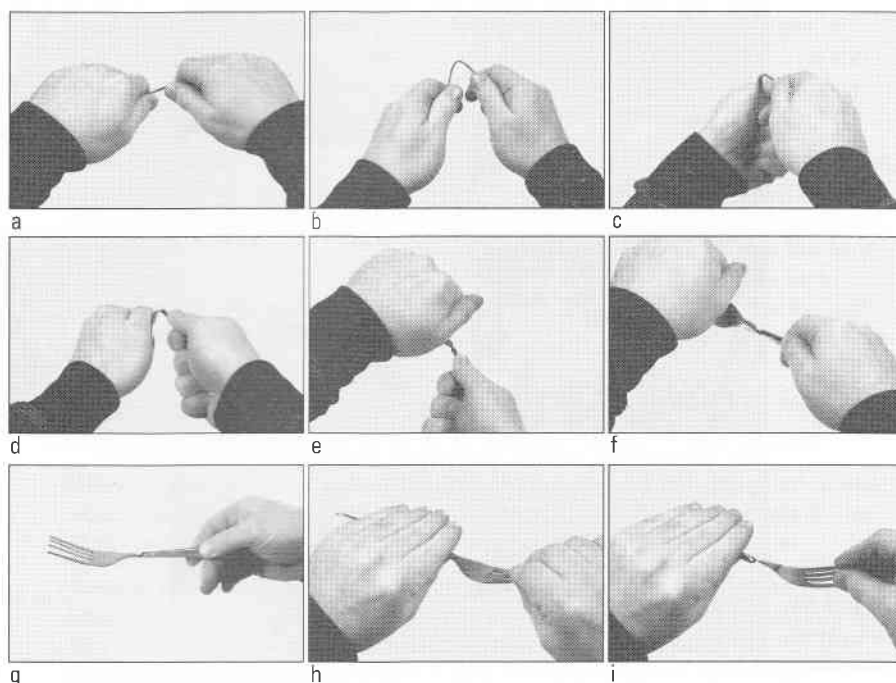


Figure 8-5:
Gripping
and twisting
the fork.

3. The reveal. You can only reveal this twist in one of two ways: in your hand or in someone else's hand. I prefer the latter, and the first time I saw this trick done I was really impressed. Now that the fork's arm is corkscrewed, you just hide it with your fingers in a nonchalant manner.

To reveal it, just grab someone's hand and make sure it's palm down. Bring the fork up underneath with your hand, and at the last second put it in the person's hand and ask her to make a fist. You want the fork head sticking out from the hole where the thumb is.

Gently turn the fork around in a circular motion in her hand and ask her to tighten the grip. Keep turning the fork and slowly pull it out as you do so. Round about now, the participant will realise that something has taken place. You straighten out the twist in the handle, then pull the fork out all the way, rotate it round and then give it to the person to look at.

Figure 8-6 illustrates how to reveal the bent fork.

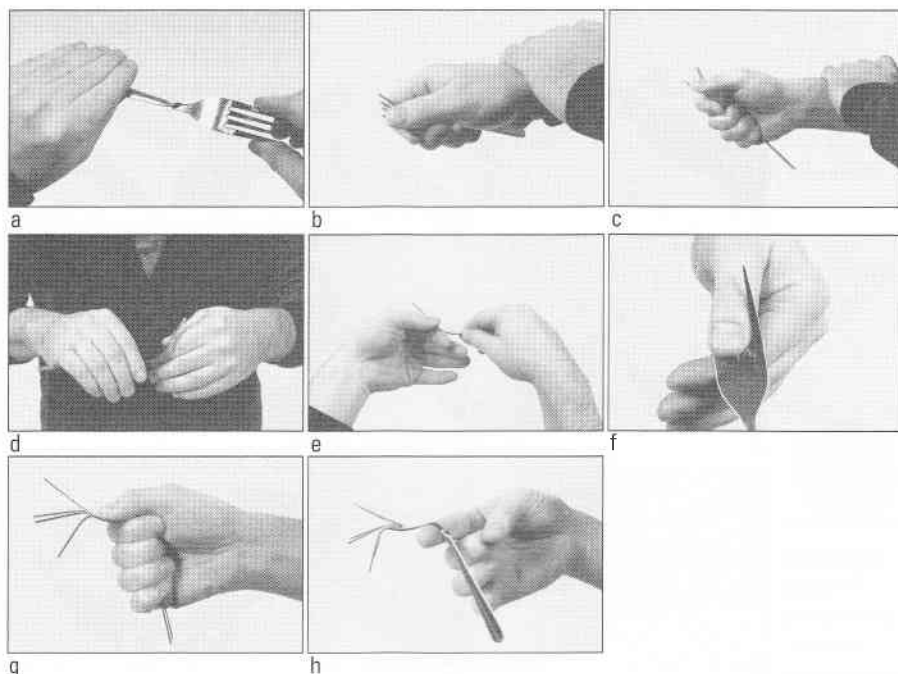


Figure 8-6:
The reveal.



Being able to do this bend without thinking about it took dozens and dozens of attempts. If you can get it right on your first try, bravo – gently pat yourself on the back. If you can do it perfectly ten times in a row and still feel your hands, I'll enthusiastically pat you on the back!

Putting the skills together

You can perform all the bends in this section and the preceding ones individually, but if you really want to impress people, put them together in a routine. To get started, you need two forks. (I prefer forks because you can do more with them.)

Score the fork (a fatigue bar) and a corkscrew (see the earlier section 'Performing the corkscrew') in one of the forks (or spoons) before you start, then follow these steps:

- 1. Present the forks.** Hold one fork in each hand and allow a participant to point at one. Keep the corkscrew hidden from view. Whatever the person chooses, use the magician's force to use the pre-bent one for the first part of this routine (I describe forcing in Chapter 5).



2. **Test the fork.** Nonchalantly smack the fork flat against your hand a couple of times to create the impression that it's solid. Don't do it too hard, though, because you don't want to break the head off. And don't do it too slowly, or the audience can see the bend.

3. **Twist the fork.** Ask the participant to take the other fork and follow along. Grasp the pre-bent fork in your left hand and begin to wobble it around, using the fingers of a loose fist as a pivot point to give the appearance of bending it. Tell the participant to copy your actions. Then, give the fork a brisk twist backwards and forwards, in clockwise and counter-clockwise direction. Slowly wobble it some more, using the thumb and index finger as the pivot point again, and bring it out all the way. Give the participant a minute to take in what you've done. Pausing is good.

4. **Perform the bowl drop.** Carry out the steps described in the 'Throwing in an optional extra: The bowl drop' section earlier in this chapter.

Keeping your index finger and thumb very tight at the break point is vital, otherwise the head falls off prematurely or shifts position and gives the break away too early. I use my left hand to keep the fork together.

Ask the participant to point her index finger upward. With your free hand, gently grasp that finger at the base near the knuckle, cupping her fist, and bring it slowly towards the fork. Get her to gently stroke the head of the fork with her finger – but you're the one controlling it.

Ask her whether she can feel the fork head getting warmer. You can say things like, 'Notice it's starting to move. It's getting warmer like a plastic fork that's been heated with fire.' As you stroke the fork head with her finger, you release just a little pressure and tilt your hand ever so slightly so that the head begins to tilt at 5 degrees, and then 20, and then 45, until it falls off completely.

5. **Take the second fork.** For the next part of the routine, you need the other fork, which hasn't been used. During an offbeat moment, bend the tine.

My friend Morgan does the bend at the very moment he pulls someone else into the routine and shakes her hand. An instant before his right hand comes up and at the moment when he makes eye contact when asking the person's name, he bends it, retains it in his left hand and thrusts his right hand out to shake.

Now shift your body entirely to her right side and keep your left side close to her. Move the fork from your left hand to your right hand and stretch it out in front of you both. Do the 'rubber pencil' move from the earlier section 'Carrying out the tine bend' and say, 'I want you to see it bending in your mind.' Continue to shake the fork, eventually slowing it down and twisting it for the reveal. Let her see it.



When you have the fork back, do the push bend in your right hand and instantly bring it up to her eye level and keep it there. Rub it pretty quickly and then just slow down the movement to reveal that bend. Say something like, 'Watch this, you'll notice that it's going to melt right here in front of you.' Then just let it dangle between your index finger and thumb, and rotate your hand around to display it.

6. **Perform another corkscrew move.** If you're really adventurous, this is the perfect time to put in another corkscrew. Say, 'Okay, I'm going to straighten this back up and put it inside your hand.' As you bring it back to yourself, put in the corkscrew. You appear to straighten it.

Motion to someone to open her hand, place the fork inside her hand and close it for her with your hands. Use your hand to cover the corkscrew. Then reveal it as instructed in the previous examples. If you want to have some fun, take the fork from the person and hand it to the biggest man you can find and ask him to see whether he can straighten it out. After he's tried (and failed), take it back.

7. **Take the fork back.** Do so in your right hand and push up your sleeves. As you do so, put in a deep tine bend. Transition the fork from your right hand to your left hand – grab it at the tines with only the first one that was bent showing to the audience – the far left one that was just bent is hidden by your thumb, which now bends the remaining two tines by pressing down on them. Then reveal the bends as normal.
8. **Perform a final bend and then reveal.** Repeat a push bend so that the entire fork is bent over. As I talk to my audience naturally, I just let everyone examine the fork – it has a twist and all the tines are bent. When you take it back, put that bend in it and reveal it as you like.

Touching Invisibly

Touch is one of the strongest human senses. Most religions assign a divine or at least a mystical power to it. The illusion in the following section uses that power to great effect.

Feeling a psychokinetic touch

The Effect: You create the impression that you've touched someone without physically touching them.

The Secret: You use an invisible thread.

Invisible thread is very thin thread (or a single strand from some thread) that's so tiny it's difficult to see with the naked eye. For this illusion, you use

any synthetic thread that's tiny, strong and can expand like a rubber band when tied in a loop. You can make your own with raw elastic invisible thread, or buy it pre-made from a magic shop.



Another option is to buy a woman's stocking and cut off both ends (black is best, but natural can work too). Find a string and slowly 'run' it out. Be careful not to break it, or you have to start all over. You want around 7.5–15 centimetres (3–6 inches), depending on how far you want it to stretch.

Follow these steps – also shown in Figure 8-7:

1. Place the thread loop on your left wrist in secret.

If you're right-handed, place the loop on your left wrist in front of any bracelets or a watch. I use a rubber band for illustration purposes: the actual loop is much harder to see.

2. Ask someone to help you. At a party, approach a couple of friends.

This trick is also a great one to perform for someone you fancy! I like to start off by saying, 'Can I ask you a question – do you believe in psychic energy?' The person you're addressing probably does, but if not that's fine too. Just respond with, 'I don't either, but I don't know what else to call this. Can I show you something really quickly?'

3. Build up the experience. Look her in the eyes and say, 'Would it be okay if I touch your arm?' Always make sure that you have the person's permission before you perform this trick, just to be on the safe side.

Turn to a second person and say, 'I want you to help. You're going to watch everything I do and make sure I don't try anything funny, okay?' Now say to the first person, 'Put your arm out in front of you. I'm going to touch you one, two or maybe three times – gently, almost like a butterfly landing on your arm. All you have to do is count how many times I do it.' Then say, 'Okay, now close your eyes – trust me. Just relax and count.'

Look at the person's friend and say, 'You count how many times, too.'

4. The get-ready. To expand the loop between your hands, slip your right middle finger under the thread and gently stretch your hands apart. I call this position the 'cat's cradle', after the children's game played with string.

5. 'Touching' the arm. Say, 'Are you ready? Okay, here we go . . . be ready to count. But do it silently for the moment.' Now, move your hands in and touch her arm several times with the thread. The movement to create the 'touch' resembles 'dipping' your hands on either side of the arm, but never actually allowing your hands or fingers to touch it.

The best thing about this trick is that the thread does all the work for you the moment you dip your hands past the arm. Do it quickly and deliberately so that the movement seems obvious to the second person watching, so that she too can count as she sees your hands move by but never touch.



Ask the first person to open her eyes and tell everyone how many touches she felt. The number matches the number of dips you carried out, but you can claim that you never touched her arm at all – and her friend can back you up.

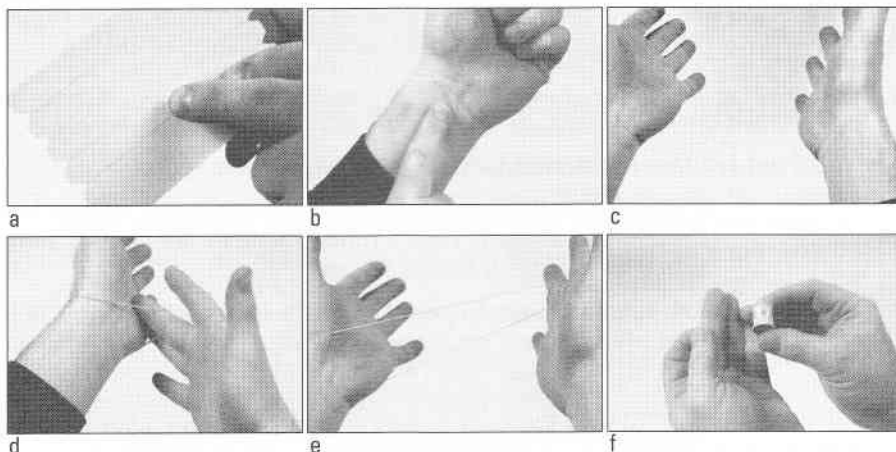


Figure 8-7:
PK touches.

Contorting a coin remotely

The Effect: You help someone bend a coin in her own hand, without touching it, presumably by using her hidden psychic powers.

The Secret: The coin is pre-bent.



Coins are the perfect item to bend. They're cheap, everyone has them and a restaurant isn't going to get mad at you for mangling them. But before you can impress people with this illusion, you need to do some work. Get two of the same coin with the same date. I prefer 20p pieces, but you can use whatever you like:

- 1. Pre-bend the coin.** You can bend a coin in a number of ways, but the easiest method is to use two adjustable spanners (also known as 'crescent wrenches') to apply opposing pressure. Take a little strip of material (perhaps cut from an old T-shirt) and fold it over the coin to protect it from getting marked. Slip a spanner on one side of the coin about halfway in and tighten it up. Take the other spanner and do the same thing on the other side. You can then gently bend the coin to whatever degree you like.

2. **The Shaw-Judah switch.** Quite often certain tricks (like this one) require you to switch a borrowed or untouched coin for one of your own. In my view, one of the easiest and most effective ways to do that is with the Shaw-Judah switch, which you can find in J.B. Bobo's book *Modern Coin Magic* (Dover Publications, 1982).



Before you begin, clip the pre-bent coin under your right thumb. Take the unbent coin from your pocket with the fingertips of your right hand (known as the *dirty hand* because it has a hidden object in it already).

Ask the person to bring her hand up to about stomach level and flatten her palm (palm up). Place your left hand under her hand to hold it still and position it. Your right hand then comes up with the unbent coin at your fingertips, and executes the switch by dumping the clipped coin in her hand; at the same time, the unbent coin is retracted and your right hand dropped to your side.

After the coin lands in her hand, immediately cover the coin with your left hand and instruct her to make a fist. As she does so, assist her with the motion by curling your left hand over her fingers and hand as it closes. This helps to make sure she keeps her hand closed and doesn't prematurely open it.

All your hard work is done at this point.

3. **The presentation.** Approach the person you want to work with and say, 'I'd like to show you something interesting.' Pull the unbent coin from your pocket. Hand it to her and ask what the date is; she looks at the coin and tells you. Take the coin back in your right hand and ask, 'Are you right- or left-handed?' No matter what she says, say, 'Okay, do me a favour. Open your left hand, palm up.'

Use your left hand to guide her hand to the right level and execute the Shaw-Judah switch into her hand, using your hand to help close her hand into a fist. Say, 'Alright, I want you to think about the coin. Think about the date on the coin. I want you to see it in your mind. I want you to see it bending, curling a little. Imagine it getting hotter. Tighten your fist. Do you feel anything?'



Almost always, the person says yes. Encourage that response by leading her with statements such as, 'Do you feel that? It's getting hotter, isn't it? You can feel it bending, can't you?' People often agree that they're feeling these sensations when, in reality, nothing is happening.

When you're ready, ask her to slowly open her hand to reveal the bent coin.

Influencing Inanimate Objects

In this section, I show you how to use your apparent psychokinetic powers to move and affect all sorts of objects.

Collapsing a bottle

The Effect: At a party you approach some friends and collapse a perfectly ordinary water bottle by focusing your mental energy.

The Secret: You achieve this effect by applying a simple principle of physics.

You may well have come across this trick in a science lesson at school, but never thought to apply it to this kind of performance. All you need is a bottle filled with some hot water, and you're good to go. The rest is all in your performance. Follow these steps:



1. **Fill the bottle.** Get an empty water bottle and fire up your kettle. Let the water get hot, but not quite boiling, and then fill up the bottle. And that's all the preparation you need for this trick.
2. **Sell the illusion.** Approach the people you want to perform for. Engage them in some friendly chit chat and turn the conversation toward magic. Ask if they want to see something and when you're ready to perform, here's how to sell the trick.

Say, 'Hey, speaking of magic, check this out.' Open the bottle and pour the previously heated but now cool water out onto the ground, in a plant or wherever. Put the cap back on. Hold just the cap between your index finger and thumb, the entire bottle parallel to the ground. Put on your acting hat and focus on the bottle intently, holding your other hand over it as if commanding it to collapse. As the bottle starts to creek and collapse in on itself, make your opposite hand shake and move a little as if you're putting some serious effort into the 'magic'.



If you decide to hand the bottle around for examination afterwards, take the cap off first to let some cool air flow in. Doing so helps to mask the fact that the water in it was hot.

Creating a wayward compass

The Effect: One of Uri Geller's signature demonstrations, aside from spoon bending, is to make a compass needle move on command. You do that, too.

The Secret: A compass essentially serves one purpose – finding magnetic north. But it's also capable of finding the magnet hidden in a thumb tip on your hand.

You need a small compass, which you can get from any outdoors equipment store, a thumb tip and a strong neodymium magnet. You can purchase thumb tips from any magic shop and they can be used for all sorts of tricks. You can find a neodymium (NdFeB) rare earth magnet online that fits snugly inside a thumb tip. I use one that's about 6 millimetres ($\frac{1}{4}$ th of an inch) squared and it works fine.

Follow these steps:



- 1. Load the thumb tip.** Put the magnet in the bottom of the thumb tip and try it on. You should be able to fit it to your thumb without any problems. If you can't, you may need to get a bigger tip, a smaller magnet or both. But the thumb tip doesn't need to go all the way on your thumb; as long as you can get it to the first knuckle, you're fine.
- 2. Make the compass move.** Put the compass on a flat surface using your hand without the thumb tip on it (what mentalists call your *non-dirty* hand). With the thumb tip on, make a fist with the other hand and point your index finger at the compass; the top of your hand needs to be upright and your thumb hidden under your index finger stretched outward, not curled.

Slowly move your index finger towards the compass, but not too close or too fast. You want to gently, gradually, ease your way towards it until you're able to gauge how close you have to be to get a reaction from the compass needle. The more you practise with it, the easier you find controlling the needle. Try to get the needle to move, but not snap, towards you. When you can do that, you're ready to share your mental ability with others, selling the trick however you like.

Moving a balanced pen

The Effect: You balance a ballpoint pen on the edge of a table, on the side of a deck of cards or on a glass. After a suitable build-up, you move the pen around and then right off the object without touching it.

The Secret: You place a thin piece of steel (called a *shim*) inside the pen, so that it reacts to the magnet you hide in your thumb tip.

My friend Banachek, one of the world's premier mentalists, performs this trick – and I love it. All you need is a tube-style ballpoint pen, a piece of steel rod (from a hobby shop or DIY store) that matches the internal diameter of the tube and your thumb tip with the magnet in it.

Follow these steps:



1. **Shim the pen.** Find the little plug on the end of the barrel of the pen. Some pens don't have that plug, and so you may need to remove the ballpoint area and pull it out. Take a look at the ink tube; it has a space that isn't filled with ink. Cut that part off and measure how long the piece is that you remove. Take the steel rod and cut it to the same length. Now reassemble the pen with the steel rod in it.
2. **Move the pen.** Place the pen on an object and balance it. Now, put the thumb tip on and move your hand towards the pen just as I describe for the wayward compass trick in the preceding section. With practice, you can get the pen to spin and fall off – you just have to discover how to manipulate it. When you feel comfortable with your ability to control the pen, you're ready to present it as an apparent miracle.

Floating a banknote

The Effect: As the name of this trick suggests, you levitate a borrowed banknote and make it float in the air.

The Secret: You suspend the money by invisible thread.

This trick is one of the first I ever learnt, and although it also falls into the category of visual magic, I think it fits perfectly into the mentalist's toolbox. This trick packs small, plays big and is sure to get you some amazing responses. You need an invisible thread reel (ITR), a piece of magicians' wax (soft beeswax works) and a borrowed banknote.

Follow these steps:



1. **Set up the invisible thread.** These reels come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but I suggest buying one made by James George in California; he makes the best and has created a 'pen' version that's fantastic. Most magic shops stock his products. Any ITR does the trick, though.

Place the ITR pen in your right front breast pocket: it looks, in every respect, like an actual pen and so nobody notices it. The pens come with a ball of wax already on the end of the invisible string, but make sure that you have some extra just in case. To test the line, pull the ball down and out in front of you with your right hand and then slowly bring it back, allowing the internal mechanism to retract the thread. If it pulls out and retracts without problem, you're ready to go.

2. **Get ready.** Reach up with your right hand and grasp the little wax ball, sticking it to the back of your right middle finger. As you draw your hand out in front of you – palm up as if you're reaching out to accept something – the invisible thread deploys with the motion of your hand. Make sure that it runs in-between your middle and ring fingers. As you gesture, gently, you can feel the tension of the ITR.
3. **Borrow a banknote from an audience member.** Grasp the note with your left hand at one end so that it's running left to right out in front of you and facing your audience. Bring it towards your left hand, behind the thread. Your right palm should be lying flat.
4. **Clip the banknote.** With the middle finger and thumb of your right hand, clip (hold it between your fingers) the note. It needs to be pressing against the extended invisible thread, with the thread running up your middle finger, over the note and back to the pen.

Using your left hand, fold the note in half around the invisible thread away from your body, and slide it up the thread away from your right middle finger, about 10 to 12.5 centimetres (4 to 5 inches). The thread is now trapped in the centre of the note.

With your left thumb, kink the centre of the note. Bring your right hand in and, using the fingers of both hands, crumple the note into a ball.

Reposition your right hand palm up, and put the ball on it.

Move slowly or the note will bounce around and reveal the secret.

5. **Levitate the banknote.** Depending upon the level of tension being produced from the ITR, the moment you remove your left hand from the note, it may begin to levitate. To control this movement, point your right index finger at the ball, and push it down against your hand.

Slowly reduce the pressure, and the note begins to float in free space. If you move your right hand up or down, the note moves up or down too. When the string is fully extended, you can remove your index finger and motion as if you're making it move with the power of your mind.

6. **Remove the banknote.** Reach up with your left hand and grab the ball. Then bring your right hand over to it and gently unfold the note and hand it back with your left hand. As you're handing the note out, you can dislodge the wax ball with the thumb of your right hand and quickly reach up towards your left shoulder to release it.

Pretending to scratch your left shoulder is the perfect cover for this movement.

As in all magic tricks, practice is essential to ensure you not only perform a trick properly but nobody catches you out. Do this in front of a mirror and scrutinise yourself as others might do. When you can perform it without catching the trick yourself, you're ready to do it for others.



PK in a package

If you want to see a great example of what you can accomplish using a custom commercial gimmick that you can buy from a magic store, check out the 'PK Glass' video on the DVD. To create that illusion, I'm using an electronic device that acts much like the arm of a mouse trap. The internal hammer springs from left to

right and smashes the glass. You can hide it in a deck of cards, a book, or insert it into a table. I have friends that actually use a mouse trap and nothing more than a fishing line pulled from off stage to create the same effect. Ingenuity at its best!

Chapter 9

Passing Tests to Prove Your Abilities

In This Chapter

- ▶ Amazing audiences with book-based effects
- ▶ Impressing with Zener cards
- ▶ Performing under lab conditions

In the late 1800s, the Center for Psychical Research began aggressively investigating claims of the paranormal. Before long, spiritualists such as Anna Eva Fay and many others were among the first to come forward publicly in an effort to establish their legitimacy in the eyes of science. Many of these tests involved the use of books and Zener cards. I show you how to perform several tricks with these props as well as some others performed under lab conditions. These effects were often designed to prove or disprove claims of the paranormal, claims that had lasted for centuries – some of which persist today.

Making a Booking for Tometastic Tricks

Magicians and mentalists have employed books in their performances for centuries (check out the nearby sidebar ‘Using books in magic effects’). But in the nineteenth century, investigators started using books to ‘test’ people’s claims of paranormal powers. Since then, psychics, mentalists and magicians have developed clever ways to perform using real and gimmicked books. This section introduces some of these tricks.

Using books in magic effects

The wide proliferation of books began after Gutenberg invented the printing press and movable type in the 1440s. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one of the earliest examples of a book being specifically printed for use as a magic prop appeared around this time too. Andrea Ghisti, a Venetian nobleman, is honoured with creating the first book that allowed a magician to 'divine' something that another person

was thinking (*The Labyrinth*, 1610). This book contained a series of images laid out in such a way that what someone had chosen could be determined through a series of eliminations. Viscount Francesco Gattici published a similar book in 1613, and in London, in 1631, Nicholas Hunt produced *Newe Recreations of the Minde*, which described how to force a particular word choice on an unsuspecting 'victim'.

Buying book tests

You can purchase hundreds of commercially produced *book tests* (gimmicked or prepared books) to use in your mentalist performances; most reputable magic shops stock them or can direct you to a producer. Although I've always loved book tests, I find that very few meet my needs. Often, the titles are cheesy, unconvincing and unlike anything you'd find in a bookshop.

When using a book test, you want to be able to leave it in an audience member's hands before and after you perform with it. You want people to be able to read the book from front to back and not spot the gimmick. High quality book tests cost hundreds of pounds and were sold only by word of mouth.

As a result, and being the entrepreneur I am, I decided to start publishing my own book tests. They sell well because of their attention to detail, use of legitimate ISBNs and recognisable titles. I painstakingly re-work classic titles such as *Dracula*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *Frankenstein*, and so on into gimmicked books that look, smell, feel and (if someone so desires!) taste in every way like a real book. Thousands of magicians and mentalists, including many of the top professionals, now use my book tests (go to my website at www.jameslclark.com).

Thinking like a mentalist

Visual magicians have a bad habit of thinking like magicians; they're always trying to cover their steps or make things look fair. As a mentalist, you're often presenting what you do as real so you don't need to worry about convincing anyone of anything – you just proceed to perform as if it's real (in other words, don't run when you're not being chased). Saying 'here is an ordinary book' is pointless; of course it's an ordinary book – even if it isn't. You never have to prove what should be assumed or obvious to your audience.



When using a gimmicked or prepared book, just reach for it and go into the routine. After all, the book is just a book. Don't feel guilty about using it and don't try to prove that it's nothing more than an 'ordinary' book. If you treat it like a normal book, the people you're performing for do so too.

Acting as though they're real applies to all of your props, not just book tests.

Performing a bold book test

David Hoy is a theologian turned mind-reader, and his bold book test is the stuff of legend. Known for his direct no-nonsense approach to performing mentalism, this trick illustrates not only Hoy's genius but also how simple (yet powerful) a book test can be. You can perform this trick anywhere, at any time and with anyone.

The Effect: You ask a volunteer to select any two books from a shelf. Of these two, you then ask him to choose one for himself.

You riffle through the pages of your copy until he tells you to stop. You tell him the page number you stopped on and instruct him to turn to that page number in his book and to read the first line on the page. He does so. After 'concentrating', you're able to reveal what he's been reading. It's a miracle! Well, maybe not.

The Secret: You miscall the number you stop on. Yep, that's it: you use the most popular of all mentalism ruses – a bold-faced lie! The number you call out is whatever you've already looked at in advance in the first book the person hands you.

The Performance: When your volunteer picks the first book, quickly open it and look at a page somewhere in the middle. Take note of the first line on that page and then close the book. Take this peek while he's looking for a second book.



When he picks the second book, take it from him and hold out both books at arm's length. Say, 'Please point to one of these books.' Note that you say 'point' and not 'choose', because you want to force on him the book you want him to use. So, if he picks the one you've already looked at by pointing at it, that's perfectly fine; simply pass it to him. If he points to the other one, say, 'Okay, I'll use this one and you take the other.'

Now say, 'I'm going to riffle through the pages. When I do, please tell me when to stop.' Begin riffing and the moment he says to stop, look down at the page number but call out the one you previously looked at in the book he's now holding. Instruct him to look at that page number and when you're ready – 'read his mind'.

Another way to force a book

Collect six books and lay them out from left to right as book one, two, the book you want to force, four, five and six. Ask a volunteer to pick a number from one to six. You use a special way of counting to ensure that the volunteer is given the force book:

- ✓ If the person says 'one', spell from the far left 'O-N-E' and you land on the force book.
- ✓ If the person says 'two', you also spell from left to right 'T-W-O' to land on the force book.
- ✓ If the person says 'three', count from left to right '1, 2, 3' to land on the force book.
- ✓ If the person says 'four', start from the right and count '1, 2, 3, 4' to get the force book.
- ✓ If the person says 'five', spell from right to left 'F-I-V-E' to land on the force book.
- ✓ If the person says 'six', spell from left to right 'S-I-X' and you land on the force book.

Carrying out an impromptu book test

Building on the trick in the preceding section, 'Performing a bold book test', you can take things to another level by using the one-ahead principle (that I describe in Chapter 4). You need two pieces of paper marked with the numbers 1 and 2 and lines drawn next to each number on which you can write a word. You also need a pen and two books. Allow your volunteer to choose any two books. He hands you one book and keeps one for himself. Now continue as follows:

1. Riffle the pages of your book and ask him to tell you when to stop.

When he does, miscall the page number to whatever suits you.

But also remember the actual page number you're looking at and the first word on that page; then close the book. Assume you land on page 100 and the word you read is 'cane', but you miscall it to page 130. Now you know that the word 'cane' is the first word on page 100 in the book you're holding, but your volunteer doesn't know that.

2. Tell your volunteer to go straight to page 130 in his book, read the first word and commit it to memory.

Instruct him to keep the word a secret and to close the book when he's done.

3. Ask him to think about the word.

Pick up one of the pieces of paper and pretend to be focusing on him. On the second line write the word you just read ('cane'), but pretend to be writing it in the first line. Place your paper face down on the table, hand your volunteer the pen and instruct him to write the word he just read on the first line of his piece of paper and place it face down on the table.



4. Look at him and casually ask what word he wrote down.

Imagine that word is 'citizen'. Don't make a big deal out of it, but remember what he says because you need it in a second.

5. Say, 'Okay, let's switch books.'

Hand him the book you used and take the one he had. Repeat the riffle from Step 1. When he tells you to stop, call out the number of the page you landed on in Step 1 but miscalled, and then close the book. In this case, it's page 100. Ask him to look at the first word in the book he's now holding and focus on it. Of course, he sees the word 'cane', which you already knew and have written down.

6. Tell your volunteer to 'send' the word to you mentally and to pick up your piece of paper.

Pretend to concentrate again and write down the second word he told you on the first line (in this example, 'citizen'). Place the paper face down again on the table and get him to close his book and write down the word he just read on his piece of paper. He dutifully writes 'cane' on the second line.

7. Look at him and say, 'Now that we've both written down our words, what was the second word you read?'

The reason you ask him to tell you the second word just as you did for the first word is to maintain continuity and throw off suspicion. To anyone watching, you seem to be confirming what you were thinking *after* you'd already written it down.

8. Ask your volunteer to turn both papers over at the same time.

He's stunned to see that you got the words right!

Making and using your own book tests

Here's another little gem that mentalist David Hoy invented decades ago.

From a discount bookshop buy three novels that are the same in terms of trim-size, type of paper, page count and publisher. You want books from the same publisher because they often use the same printer, which ensures that the books have a similar weight and feel.

Of these three titles, pick one and buy another two copies of it. All in all, you buy five books.



Pick titles that are relevant to the show you're going to perform. For example, for Halloween purchase three different titles on ghost stories, along with the two duplicates. Also, choose titles that people may be familiar with but haven't necessarily read, such as one of the classics. If your audience members are

familiar with a prop, they're less suspicious of it – which is always helpful to a mentalist.

You also need some rubber cement or another suitable adhesive.



At home, gently tear the covers off the two duplicate books and the two that you don't have duplicates of. Leave one duplicated book intact. Now, glue the two different covers onto the duplicate books. When you're done, you have three books with different covers but the same insides. Place the books under something heavy, such as larger books, and let them dry.

When you're ready to perform with your three newly gimmicked books, follow these steps:

1. Put all three books on a table and ask a volunteer to pick one.

Ask the person to choose carefully, though, because he'll be sticking with it throughout the experiment.

2. Ask a different volunteer to pick one of the remaining books.

Ask him to place one of your business cards somewhere in the book, leaving about 2 centimetres (1 inch) poking out like a bookmark.

3. Take that book from him and open it to wherever the business card is placed. Secretly look at the first word on the top left page and commit it to memory.

Place the card over that word casually and show him the page number he picked, before shutting the book and discarding it.

4. Ask your first volunteer to turn to the same page number in his own book as that chosen by the second volunteer.

You already know the word because your book is an exact duplicate except for the cover. So, simply pretend to have special abilities before revealing the word in a dramatic manner of your choice.

Playing with an invisible book

The Effect: In Chapter 5, I describe a classic trick called the *invisible deck*, purportedly inspired when a magician watched a patient in a psychiatric hospital shuffle an imaginary deck of cards and proceed to play a game. This trick uses an imaginary book instead of a deck of cards. A volunteer pretends to look at a book in your hand, thinks of a word and, when you open a sealed envelope, his word is written on a piece of paper inside.

The Secret: This trick makes clever use of dual reality, a special moulded plastic prop called a Sanada Gimmick and multiple 'outs'.



Dual reality is when two groups of people see two different illusions – one group sees a minor illusion and the other a larger illusion – but neither group knows that the other group has experienced something different. The *Sanada Gimmick* is made of flesh-tone plastic and cleverly resembles the second and third joints of the middle and ring finger. You can buy one at any magic shop. You use this gimmick to conceal things until you want to produce them. When you're holding the gimmick, you can show the palms of your hands, and they appear empty.

In this trick, you have three words written on the back of a small piece of paper that fits behind the gimmick and remains hidden until you need them. The *outs* are alternative directions you can go in during your performance, which are often dictated by a volunteer. Outs are like choices you're already prepared for in advance.

The Setup: On a small piece of paper about the same size as the back of your Sanada Gimmick, write the words 'flat', 'rose' and 'rat' in black ink. Make sure that the writing is easily readable. Stick this piece of paper to the back of the Sanada Gimmick using double-sided tape.

On three individual pieces of A4 paper, write each word in black marker pen. Make the words large enough for members of your audience to see them.

Before the show starts, crumple up the paper with the word 'rose' on it. Then fold up the paper with the word 'rat' on it and put it in an envelope. Put the envelope in plain view on the stage (but don't call attention to it during your performance). Finally, secretly tape the paper with the word 'flat' on it under one of the seats in the front row of your audience. The rest is presentation.

The Performance: Pick a volunteer. I usually pick a female when performing this trick because she's more likely to pick the word 'rose' than the other intentionally less attractive words.

Follow these steps:

- 1. Address the person sitting in the chair that has the paper with the word 'flat' taped to it.**

Say, 'Hi there. What's your name?' When the person tells you his name, continue with, 'Nice to meet you. Now, we've never met before, correct?' The person agrees. Say, 'I'd like you to take this crumpled-up piece of paper and gently toss it behind you to a woman you don't know so that she can help me out. Go ahead and do that now.' When he does so, ask the woman to come up on stage and to bring the balled-up paper with her.

- 2. Introduce yourself to your helper and ask her name.**

Ask her if she likes to read and what she's read recently. As she names something, show her your cupped hands and say, 'I'd like you to imagine that my hands are holding that book.' Bring your hands apart and casually 'talk' with your hands, showing everyone that they're empty. Of course, you're holding the Sanada Gimmick in the crook of your fingers.

3. Cup your hands together again.

Say, 'Okay, great. I want you now to imagine that you're turning the pages. What page did you land on?' She names a number. 'Perfect. Thank you.' Pull your hands away and 'talk' with them again, motioning enough so people can see you have nothing in your hands.

4. Return your hands to the cupped position.

As you do so, bring your hands together and turn the Sanada Gimmick over so the volunteer can see the three words printed on the small piece of paper. Say, 'I want you to look on that page. You now see some words. Pick one of the words and say it out loud for everyone to hear.' She chooses one of the words now in front of her face. When she names it out loud, casually turn the gimmick back over and nonchalantly display your hands as still empty to the audience.

5. Bring the outs into play.

If she says the word 'rose' (the best possible outcome for this routine), get her to open up the crumpled paper in her hand and display it to everyone by saying, 'You've been holding that crumpled piece of paper the whole time. Wouldn't it be amazing if the word you just named was on that paper?'

However, if she says the word 'rat', which is very rare, just take the crumpled paper from her casually and say, 'This whole time there's been an envelope sitting on the table in plain view. Can you open that up for me?' and get her to display it.

Finally, if she happens to choose the word 'flat', take the crumpled paper from her and ask the person who threw it to stand up. Say, 'As you attested, we've never met before. But I had a feeling about you. If you look under your chair, there's a piece of paper with something printed on it taped to the underside. Can you please remove that and show it to the audience?'

Teleporting a book page

The Effect: You ask a volunteer to join you on stage and then hand him an envelope that's clearly empty. He seals this envelope himself and retains it. You ask a second volunteer to join the two of you, and get him to select a random page from a book, look at the first few words on that page and commit them to memory. He does so. Everyone in the audience is then instructed to imagine a page being ripped from that book – to hear the sound and see it being torn in their minds. You ask the person holding the book to look at the page he chose; it's gone. You ask the first volunteer to open the envelope he's been holding the whole time, and inside is the torn page.

The Secret: The envelope isn't really empty – a duplicate page has been pre-loaded into it from a duplicate book. The envelope is specially designed to give the appearance of being empty. The first book has the page in it and is used to force the page. You then switch the book at an offbeat moment.

What You Need: You need to construct the envelope and prepare the book. I suggest using a top-loading manila envelope that's just a bit larger than the book page itself (so that the torn page can fit in it). You also need a sharp pair of scissors, some rubber cement, a regular glue stick, a black marker pen and two identical paperback books.

The Setup: Pick the page you want to force and tear it unevenly from one of the books, so some of the page is clearly still attached to the binding. Place the duplicate book in your performance case on stage, out of view.



Making the specially gimmicked envelope (called a *teleport envelope*) is relatively easy and takes about ten minutes. Follow these steps:

1. Remove the glue from the envelopes.

Use a soft rubber to gently remove the adhesive from the flaps of two identical envelopes.

2. Open the bottom of each envelope.

Carefully open the bottoms of both envelopes. You may need to use the steam from a kettle or iron.

Whatever you do, don't tear the envelopes.

3. Cut the back off one envelope.

Use a sharp pair of scissors or a paper cutter to cut the entire back off one envelope on the seamed side. You do so by cutting along the long sides right on the edges. The side with the flaps serves as an insert to create a pocket inside the other envelope, and the back helps keep things clean while you're gluing them in a moment.

4. Trim the sides.

Take the insert and trim about 1.5 millimetres ($\frac{1}{16}$ th of an inch) off each side so it fits snugly inside the other envelope. You also need to trim down the top flap, following the curvature of its shape so that, later, the flap of the second envelope that it's going to fit inside can cover it.

5. Glue the envelope.

Place a piece of paper under the insert and apply a healthy portion of rubber cement to the entire top flap of the insert and about 25 millimetres (1 inch) down from the fold line. Use the cut-off back as a guide so that the line of glue is perfectly straight. Place that aside and apply a



thin layer of rubber cement on the back of the envelope where the flap will come down. Essentially, you're replacing the adhesive that was initially removed. Finally, open the second envelope by pressing on the edges to bow it open. On the back, apply a line of rubber cement about 13 millimetres (half an inch) down from the edge inside the envelope. While it dries, stick a toothpick inside to keep it bowed open.

6. Put the gimmicked envelope together.

When all the glued parts are completely dry, you can begin assembling the envelope. To start, put the insert inside the other envelope.

Rubber cement is designed to stick to itself, and so be careful not to let any of the areas that you glued touch each other accidentally. To help keep things from sticking, place a piece of paper in the second envelope as you're placing the insert inside. Slide the insert in until the flaps are perfectly aligned at the folds.

Coat the trimmed flap with a glue stick and fold it over onto the back. Repeat this step with the bottom flap so that it conceals the smaller flap you previously trimmed underneath it. Do the same with the bottom flaps.

7. Place the torn page inside.

You now have a perfectly normal-looking envelope that, owing to the rubber cement, is self-sealing. Inside, of course, is the insert creating a special pocket where the torn page goes. Place the duplicate page inside between the two flaps, and glue the two flaps together, sealing it safely inside. Then, carefully trim away the edges of the flap so the whole thing looks like a single unit.

Draw a dotted line on front of the envelope about 3 millimetres ($\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch) from the top. This line indicates where a volunteer should cut it open during your performance.



Make up a handful of envelopes in one setting. Just cut out the pieces you need and set everything up like an assembly line.

The Performance: Ask a volunteer to join you on stage, and then follow these steps:

1. Take the envelope from the table and bow it to show the inside to your volunteer.

Say, 'Look inside. You can see the envelope is empty, correct?' After he confirms that nothing's inside, instruct him to close the flap and seal it, and to hold on to the envelope. Position him so he's on your right side during the performance if you're facing the audience.

2. **Call another volunteer up on stage, and position him 5 or 6 metres (say around 16 to 18 feet) away from the first volunteer, on your left side.** Reach for the book with the page still inside that should be sitting on the table in the middle of the stage directly behind you and say, 'I'm going to flip through the pages. I'd like you to tell me when to stop.' When he does so, you need to force the page that's inside the envelope.



3. **Force the page.**

Here's probably the easiest way to force a page. Before you perform, crease the book at the page you're going to force by opening up the binding a bit more than you would normally. Trim about 3mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch) off the side-edge of the page, which makes it shorter than all the other pages in the book.



A guillotine provides a cleaner edge.

Forcing the page is easy because the book naturally breaks there when you riffle the pages from the back of the book to the front.

Turn to the volunteer on your left a few metres away. Hold the book at the spine in your left hand, with your right hand grasping the pages and bending them slightly over to the right. Notice that the short page is a bit more obvious to you now. Instruct the second volunteer to tell you to stop as you turn toward him a little and allow the pages to release through your thumb from right to left in a cascade. As he says stop, allow the book to fall at the break. Open the book and ask him to take note of the page number and the first few words on the page. Make sure that he's memorised this information, and then close the book.

4. **Swap the non-gimmicked book for the gimmicked one with the page torn out.**

Pretend to forget something and say, 'Oh, I need scissors.' Walk over to your case, which is sitting with its lid open on the table upstage. You need it positioned there so that nobody can see inside, especially your two volunteers. This is why you positioned them as you did on your left and right, respectively, near the front of the stage.

The moment you step behind the case, reach in with both hands at the same time and calmly switch the books with your left hand.

Don't look at your left hand when it does the switch; just do it in one continuous motion and then raise your hand back up and rest it on the top of the case as though you're steadying the lid. The switch shouldn't take any effort, and should be executed nonchalantly. By keeping your left hand in view holding the book, while your right hand continues to look for a scissors, the procedure appears natural. Focus on your right hand as it appears to be searching for the scissors. Then say, 'Right, here we go.' Walk back out to your volunteer and give him the scissors. (Use blunt-ended scissors so that he's not tempted to use them as a letter opener.)





Offer up continuous commentary as you execute the switch because doing so helps to emphasise the normal nature of the situation.

5. Walk back to the second volunteer and hand him the book.

Say, 'Call the page number out loud again so that everyone can hear.' He does so. Hand him the book and ask him to hold it between his outstretched hands directly facing volunteer one.

6. Position yourself in the middle of the stage.

Ask the second volunteer to call out the page number one more time, open the book to that page and read the first line out loud. When he does so, the page has gone. Pause for a moment, and then look at the first volunteer and say, 'You examined the empty envelope. You sealed it. You've held it the whole time. Please cut the envelope open on the dotted line and look inside.' Of course, he finds that the page is in there!

Displaying Your ESP Skills

Unless you happen to possess real ESP or are a fantastic cheater, you're incredibly unlikely to be able to consistently name the identity of face-down cards. Using Zener cards (see Chapter 5 for more on these) is the most popular way to test a person's ESP skills. In fact, the tricks I describe in this section all use Zener cards (and no paranormal abilities at all!).

A Zener deck consists of five sets of five cards, each with a single symbol on the face: a star, circle, wavy lines, square or cross. The total of five different symbols on the 25 cards means that the odds of guessing any given card is 20 per cent, and rises statistically in terms of getting any guess right.



To make your success rate 100 per cent buy a set of marked Zener cards and commit the markings to memory.

Introducing the no way, no how

This great trick uses the dead-pen method in which you apparently mark an item with a pen or pencil but, in reality, don't write anything at all (check out Chapter 6 for more dead-pen effects).

You need two pencils (one with nail polish on the tip and one normal one) and five index cards or blank-backed business cards. On the back of each of the five cards, draw a star, a circle, wavy lines, a square or a cross so that you create a typical Zener set. Before you begin performing, secretly draw an 'X' across the entire back of one of the cards and lose it in the pile. On the back of a business card draw the same symbol and keep it in your wallet.

When you're ready to share this little miracle, take out the stack of five cards with their faces up and follow these steps:

1. Convince your audience.

Casually flash the back of the packet to convince the audience that all the cards are blank and then show the faces one at a time. Ask for a volunteer and say, 'I have a set of cards here that I've drawn symbols on. There's a star, a circle, wavy lines, a square and a cross. Please put these cards behind your back and turn them over. Now, go ahead and shuffle them up as you like, as many times as you like. When you've done that, let me know.' He does so.

2. 'Write' on a card.

Open your wallet and remove the pre-drawn on business card, but don't let anyone see it. Pull out the pencil with clear nail polish on the tip and pretend to draw something, and then place the business card face down on the table. Hand your volunteer the second pencil, which doesn't have nail polish on it, and say, 'Take this and draw an "X" across the entire back of one of the cards from one corner to the other so it spans the width and height of the card. Do you understand? Great, do that now.' When he's done so, ask him to bring out the cards and spread them on the table so that the 'X' can be seen.

3. Reveal the card.

Spread out the cards and turn over the ones that don't have the mark and say, 'You could have picked this one or this one here. You could have also picked this symbol, but you didn't.' Repeat this patter until you've exposed all the cards that haven't been marked. Slide your prediction card across the table (the one you've already secretly marked with an 'X') to him and motion for him to look at it.

Stacking a Zener deck

Stacking the deck is when you put cards in a prescribed order so that you know the position of any given card based on the card before or after it (check out Chapter 5 for more details).



Use a standard set of 25 Zener cards for this stack. Pull them out of the pack and put them in the following face-up order: circle, star, circle, cross, circle, wavy lines, square, square, star, square, cross, square, wavy lines, star, star, cross, star, wavy lines, cross, cross, wavy lines, wavy lines, circle, circle and square. To anyone looking, including most mentalists, the order of the cards appears entirely random, following no obvious pattern.



Like any other stack, you can proceed to perform full-cuts or false shuffles, but never allow it to be mixed for real.

Remove the stacked Zener deck from its box, face the cards toward the person you're performing for, and quickly run the cards from one hand to the other so that he can see the faces, which you indicate are fully mixed. If you like, false-shuffle the deck or simply place it on the table. But in all cases, you need to get the person to cut the cards several times to create the impression that the deck is well mixed.

To work out the order, you need to know the identities of two adjacent cards:

1. Discover the identity of the first card.

Ask the volunteer to stop during the cut and show the cut card. Say, 'That card won't count in this experiment because we can see it as you cut. I want this to be fair.'

2. Discover the identity of the second card.

Say, 'Let's try this a couple of times. Can you sense what the top card might be?' Get the volunteer to guess and then to turn the card over. Whether he gets it right or wrong doesn't matter; the important thing is that you now know what's coming next in the stack.

3. Play a game.

Place that card on the bottom and ask the first volunteer to guess what the top card is. You also make a guess and, amazingly, you're right. Jazz up your performance with whatever patter comes to mind.

Thinking of a Zener card

This trick demonstrates your incredible extra-sensory perception.

The Effect: You ask a volunteer to think of one of the symbols in a Zener deck. After shuffling a deck, you show random cards without ever seeing them yourself, but you're still able to determine the thought-of card.

The Secret: You pre-arrange the cards and assign values to them that allow you to work out the thought-of card.

The Setup: Remove the following cards and create three different piles. In Pile A place a circle, wavy lines and a star. In Pile B place a cross, a square and a star. In Pile C place wavy lines, a square and a star.

Associating a numerical value with each pile is the key to working out what symbol the volunteer thought of: A = 1, B = 2 and C = 2.



Take the piles and place them one on top of the other. Place Pile A on top of Pile B and that new pile on top of Pile C'; doing so creates a total of nine cards in a specific order. Place these cards on the bottom of the Zener deck and put the deck back into its box.

The Performance: Remove the Zener deck from your pocket and place it on the table. Now follow these steps:

1. Set the background.

Explain the usage of the deck and its history. Ask someone to think of one of the five Zener symbols. Remove the cards from the box and shuffle them, being sure to leave the nine cards at the bottom in order.

2. Mix the cards.

While maintaining control over the bottom portion of the deck so it doesn't get messed up, randomly pull out three cards at a time from various parts of the deck and show them to your volunteer. Say, 'I'm going to show you three cards at a time. If you see your card in the set, tell me so but don't name it. Just confirm whether it's there or say it isn't.'

3. Keep track.

What happens doesn't matter until you get to the bottom of the deck and show the sets of symbols on the last nine cards. Pretend to pay close attention to the volunteer's facial expressions and what he says as you reveal each set of three cards. You need to commit to memory which of the three piles his card was in, and associate a value with that pile so that you can keep a running count, as follows:

- If he sees his card in Piles A and C, you know that your total is $1 + 2$, which equals 3. The numerical value 3 means that the card he's thinking of is the wavy lines card.
- If he sees his card in Piles B and C (which equals 4), you know that his card is the square, which has four lines.
- If he sees his card in Piles A, B and C (which equals 5), you know that he's thinking of the star, which has five points.

Working under Test Conditions

The term *test conditions* suggests controlled methods of examination designed to prevent a subject from cheating. Unfortunately, most scientists are uninitiated and know very little, if anything, about trickery. Therefore, countless subjects have found ways to not only cheat, but also convince others that they have ESP. As a mentalist performer, replicating examples of those kinds of experiments for your audience is relatively easy, as I demonstrate in this section.

Being Stepanek: Sensing through sealed envelopes

Pavel Stepanek entered the *Guinness Book of World Records* in 1970 as the most successful person to be tested for ESP. During parapsychology tests, the average person scores average results in line with the statistical probability of guessing. Stepanek appeared, by all accounts, to score well above mere mortals – at about 60 per cent. In one particular experiment in 1962, he managed to accurately identify paper slips in 50 opaque envelopes 100 per cent of the time. According to my mentor, Martin Gardner, the probability of that percentage being mere chance is 1 in 1,125,899,906,842,464!

You don't have to be a mathematician to understand that a statistic like that is more than sufficient to establish the truth of a claim – if it can be repeated. Well, the trick in this section is about as close as you can get by faking it. But with some clever patter and presentation, you can be just as convincing as Stepanek.

The Effect: You place a group of envelopes and cardboard inserts on a table. All the envelopes are the same, as are all the inserts – except that one cardboard insert is painted black on one side. A volunteer inserts the cardboard pieces into each envelope in any order he fancies while your back is turned, and he mixes them up on the table. You turn around and, after concentrating, identify the envelope with the black cardboard in it.

The Secret: The black cardboard insert is secretly shimmed with ferrous metal to enable you to easily identify it, because the magnet in the thumb tip you're wearing is attracted to it (turn to Chapter 10 more effects with secret shims and magnets).

What you need: A standard plastic thumb tip; a strong but small neodymium magnet that fits snugly in the end of the tip; 5, 10 or even 50 opaque manila envelopes; corrugated cardboard inserts that fit inside the envelopes; black construction paper; ultra-thin tin foil (or other thin ferrous sheet metal); a pair of scissors; and a glue stick.



The Setup: Lay out the envelopes and pair each one with an insert. Cut a rectangle slip of metal about 5 centimetres (2 inches) long and glue it directly in the centre of one insert. Wipe a good layer of glue all over the insert, making sure to get the edges. Lay the black construction paper on top and gently smooth it out on the insert, being careful not to press anywhere around the shim because doing so scores the paper and leaves an outline. Allow it to dry and trim off the extra black paper. Stick the neodymium magnet in the end of the thumb tip; then wave your hand over the back of the card to feel the attraction.



Make sure that the magnet doesn't pick up the insert and give away the trick.

After telling your audience about the history of paranormal investigations and the statistical success rate of test subjects such as Stepanek, state that you're going to try to replicate what he accomplished under the fairest of 'test conditions'. Follow these steps:

1. Ask a volunteer to join you on stage.

Show him and the audience that you have a set of envelopes and a set of inserts. Explain that all of the inserts are identical except one, which is black on one side and serves as the 'control' item.

2. Turn your back.

Ask your volunteer to make sure that none of the envelopes has any markings or identifiable features, and then to randomly enter the inserts and close the envelope flaps. Get him to close his eyes and mix the envelopes up so not even he knows which is which.

3. Stand in front of the table, wearing your thumb tip, and concentrate.

Gently place your hand over each envelope, carefully using your finger tips to hold the envelope down as your thumb brushes on top feeling for the magnetic attraction. Done properly, your fingers keep the envelope from lifting. Repeat this exercise for every envelope and then reveal the correct envelope.

Experimenting with remote viewing

Remote viewing is a common test in which a purported psychic is isolated in one room and asked to duplicate what he 'sees' another person drawing in a separate room (I touch on remote viewing in Chapter 10, too). The following trick allows you to create an 'experiment' in a lab of your choice: home, coffee shop, theatre or whatever.

The Effect: Ask a volunteer to imagine that he's regressing in time to when he was a very small child and could draw only scribbly lines rather than recognisable shapes. You give him a pile of business cards and he puts them behind his back. He then draws on the back of one card and mixes it in with the other cards so that nobody can see what he's drawn. You draw whatever comes to your mind, too, and place the drawing down on the table. When his card is revealed, the two look almost identical.

The Secret: This is another great trick with a dead pen (see the 'Writing secretly' section earlier in this chapter). The card he 'draws on' is pre-drawn with scribbly lines on it. You've pre-drawn a matching card that you keep in your wallet.

The Performance: Take your wallet out of your pocket and then follow these steps:

1. Produce the business cards.

In the stack are the two cards with essentially the same drawing on them. Say, 'I have a stack of cards here. I'm going to give you a few and keep one for myself.' Bring out two pencils, one for you and one for your volunteer. Both have been dipped in clear nail polish so they can't write. Take the card you're going to use and hold on to it. Slide the stack of cards toward the volunteer.

Continue, 'In a moment, I want you to do something for me. I'm going to get you to draw on one of these cards and then sandwich it between the others so nobody can see it.'



Sometimes, I induce Alpha at this point (turn to Chapter 12 for a fuller description of how to induce this state of susceptibility) so the volunteer relaxes and is less focused.

Continue with, 'But the important thing is that I don't want you to draw a shape. No circles, squares, houses or anything like that. I want you to imagine yourself back in nursery school, scribbling without lifting the tip of the pencil off the card. Don't even try to see what you're writing in your mind. Just let the drawing be automatic, as though it's flowing from you and you have no control over it.'

2. Hand the volunteer the cards, face up, and ask him to put them behind his back.

'I want you to mix them up a bit, so you're not forced to use a card that was handed to you as is. Mix them and when you feel comfortable, stop on a card and prepare to draw.'

Get him to close his eyes, take deep breaths and relax. Instruct him to gently scribble in one continuous flow. At the same time, pretend to draw your shape.

3. Compare the drawings.

Give him a moment and then tell him to stop. Ask him to mix the cards up again several times so the drawing is lost and hidden, and then turn them over so the cards are face up and nobody can see what's on the backs. Instruct him to put the cards on the table and ask him what he felt when he was drawing, if anything. Ask whether anything was going through his mind and chat for a moment. Then turn your card over and remark, 'Hmmm, sort of strange looking, wouldn't you agree?' Show it to him and talk about the drawing for a second. After a bit of chit chat, ask him to show you his card and compare the two drawings. Generally, the volunteer is absolutely astounded!

Part III

Using the Power of Your Mind: Hands-Off Mentalism

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"All that mentalism you've been studying is a bunch of rubbish! It's all stupid nonsense, I tell you! A ridiculous waste of time! Foolishness, hokum, tommyrot, codswallop..."

In this part . . .

In this part we give you a hypnotising look at how to make accurate predictions – days, weeks or even years ahead of time, how to read people cold, and how to work with friends to mess with anyone, anywhere, anytime. This part will pull the blinders off your eyes and expose the inner most secrets of hands-off mentalism, before having you put the blindfold right back on.

Chapter 10

Developing Extra Senses: Seeing without Seeing

In This Chapter

- ▼ Transferring images by thought
- ▼ Gaining mysterious new ways of ‘seeing’
- ▼ Leading an audience a merry dance while blindfolded

One of the most remarkable demonstrations of so-called extra-sensory perception (ESP) – that is, doing something without using any of the normal five senses – is the apparent ability to sneak into people’s minds and reveal what they’re seeing or thinking. In this chapter, I show you how to reproduce an image that someone else draws out of your sight, ‘read’ people’s minds and perform all sorts of amazing acts while blindfolded. With the tools I describe here, you can convince the most ardent sceptic that ESP really does exist (at least for the length of your performance!).

Duplicating Unseen Designs

In 1882, Fredric W.H. Myers, one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research, coined the term *telepathy* – meaning the remote transference of thoughts between two or more people by using the power of the mind. In over 100 years of scientific testing, not a single claim of this phenomenon has been legitimately corroborated. I suppose that’s why so many different mentalist routines exist today that perfectly mimic the supposed ability. Effects known as *design duplication* are very common in mentalism, and I introduce you to two in this section.

Transferring thoughts in close-up

One enduring example of ESP is *automatic writing*, which became popular during the spiritualist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Also referred to as *design duplication*, *psychic drawing*, *remote viewing*, *thought transference* and *telepathic imagery*, the basic routine involves someone drawing a picture on a pad and keeping it hidden, and the performer subsequently duplicating the image sight unseen.



For this trick and similar ones, I prefer intimate performances – any situation where people surround me, within arms' distance – because the vibe is invariably more dynamic and energetic. People love to be entertained, and this routine is a great way to do that.

The Effect: A person draws something and, without seeing it, you duplicate it.

What You Need: Two pads of paper and two black marker pens.

The Secret: You actually do see what the person draws. Use a peek, such as the Acidus Test.

The Performance: Tell your selected person that you want to try something interesting – a skill you've been working on for a while. I enjoy using statements such as 'I don't always get this right' to create the impression that failure is possible, and then, when I get it correct, I'm able to act surprised. All you have to do is get the person to draw something on a piece of paper, and then, after you peek it, draw it as if you're 'receiving' the image from the volunteer.



Don't duplicate the person's drawing too closely; make it obviously similar, but not exact. The whole idea is to suggest that you're getting an impression of what the person draws, not a perfect picture.

Influencing with subtlety

This trick uses some of the playing deck-handling techniques from Chapter 5, adds a useful piece of sleight of hand (the double undercut) and manages to advertise your mentalist services at the same time!



Throughout this book, I suggest using business cards for your tricks whenever possible. If you can mix entertainment and self-marketing, people are far less likely to throw away your card. This approach is how I like to, well, 'influence' people to keep my contact details.

The Effect: You take out some of your business cards and ask a spectator to draw or write something on the back. You then magically 'duplicate' what she drew without seeing it.

What You Need: A stack of business cards with blank backs and a black marker pen.

The Secret: You use sleight of hand to control the cards so that you can peek what was drawn or written on it by the spectator.

Perform the trick by following these steps (also illustrated in steps (a)–(j) in Figure 10-1):

1. Draw a square.

On the back of one of the business cards, draw a square in the upper two-thirds. Ask someone to help you, and get her to write her first name underneath the square.

2. Get your volunteer to draw something.

Hand her the card and pen, and instruct her to draw anything she likes in the box at the top but to not show it to you or anyone else. Turn around so that you cannot see her do it.

When your volunteer is finished, turn around, hold out your left hand with the stack of face-up business cards held in it with the mechanic's grip (flip to Chapter 5 for details of how to use this technique) and ask her to place the card she's just drawn, drawing-side down, on top of that stack.

3. Control the card so that it moves to the bottom.

You can control business cards in many of the same ways that you can control playing cards. One technique that you need to master is the *double undercut*, which allows you to move the top card of the pile to the bottom, while appearing to lose it somewhere in the middle.

With the entire stack still in the mechanic's grip in your left hand, *biddle grip* (described in the nearby sidebar) about two-thirds of the business cards with your right hand and cut them off, leaving one-third in your left hand.

Clip (hold or lightly grip) that lower third with your left thumb and bring it to the top, apparently to cover the card with the person's drawing on it.

As the lower-third packet reaches the top of the stack of business cards, your right middle finger and right thumb capture it, while the left hand repositions to grasp another third from the bottom.

Introducing the Biddle Grip

The *Biddle Grip* is a card-handling technique in which you grab part of or an entire deck of cards with your right hand from your left hand, which is holding the deck in the 'mechanic's grip' (see Chapter 5). To do it, all you do is pick

up the cards from the top of the deck by placing your right index, middle and ring fingers on the top short edge of the deck, while your right thumb tip is at the short edge closest to your body.



Secretly, while doing this, your left thumb and right middle finger need to work together to ease off the drawn-on card.



As your left hand slips off the final pack and reaches the top again, both your hands come together, allowing the entire stack with the drawn-on card on the bottom to land in your left palm.

Practise this process thoroughly until you can do it smoothly and with confidence.

4. Duplicate the design.

Turn the first business card over and redraw the square at the top, and write your name at the bottom, just as you did before. Lift the entire stack and display the blank square you just drew to the person helping you, saying, 'I've drawn the same box, but notice that mine's empty; I'd like you to think of what you drew and imagine it here in this square.'

When you do so, quickly peek at the back card (see Chapter 7 for all about sneaking a peek) and put the entire stack back into your left hand. Tilt your left hand back toward your chest and begin to duplicate what you saw. You don't want to reveal it just yet.



When you peek the bottom, drawn-on business card by showing the top card to the volunteer, be careful that no audience members are behind you because they'll see it too and may blow your trick. When you're duplicating the drawing, keep your windows (the space between your fingers) closed or people may see the bottom card as you tilt your hands back to keep what you're drawing from prying eyes.

5. Reveal that both drawn-on cards match.

Ask the volunteer to lay her hand out flat. Turn the top card over and place it drawing-side down on her palm. Hand the person the pen, saying, 'Here, hold this for a second.' When she takes the pen, hold up the stack of cards and nonchalantly spread them between your hands with the backs toward you. As you're spreading them out, thumb off the bottom card toward the others in the middle so the cards appear to have been mixed. Seemingly pull it out from the middle and reveal both cards as you like.

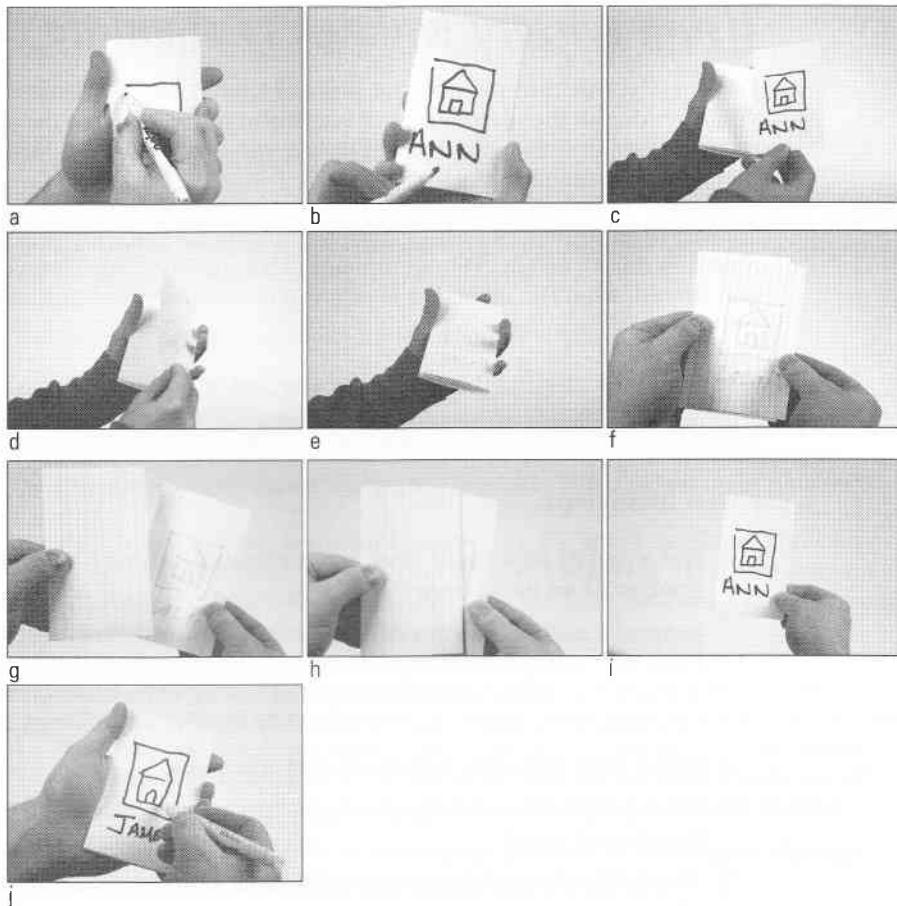


Figure 10-1:
Design
duplication.

Demonstrating Your Sightless Vision

The English logician William Ockham said that the simplest explanation to a problem is most likely to be the correct one. So if someone claims to have ESP and demonstrates something that seems impossible, surely the most likely reason is that the person is faking. When witnessing such a performance you can take what you see at face value, which leads to believing the performance even though logic indicates that it's probably based on lies, or accept that what you saw isn't *really* what you saw.

In this section, I demonstrate several tricks that can allow you to pretend to have various paranormal abilities or to debunk such claims.

Using sensory leakage to simulate ESP

Fortunately, this title sounds a lot messier than it really is! Unless, of course, you consider all those examples of intelligent and respected people who were fooled into believing that ESP exists and allowed their reputations to be damaged as a result of sensory leakage.

Sensory leakage describes how information can be naturally transferred to a person during an experiment instead of through psychic means. To the uninitiated, what the mentalist is doing seems legitimate – but, of course, the performer is cheating.

The first time I tried out this trick I was shocked at how easily I was able to ‘read’ what someone was drawing on a pad. The mentalist uses very close observation to take a surprisingly accurate educated guess in the trick I describe below.

Follow these steps:

- 1. Get a pad of paper and draw a big rectangle about 5 millimetres (a quarter of an inch) from the edges.**

Instruct a volunteer to draw whatever she likes in that space. Say something like, ‘Can you draw something in this rectangle as though you’re seeing it on a big television screen. Make it big, like a close-up scene in a film, something simple, I don’t know, like scenery or buildings or whatever.’

- 2. Stand back from the person and let her draw.**

Most people draw the same things – mountains, rivers, oceans, ships, houses and so on.

- 3. Watch the person’s hand movements closely, but don’t do it in an obvious way.**

Look for high points and low points on the paper as the pen or pencil moves around – they may be mountains. Look for squares – they can be the basics for a house. Unless you get an artist who’s truly skilled, you can bet the drawing is of something commonplace that most people would be quick to draw, such as everyday objects. Watch the arms and pay attention. The person is focused on what she’s doing, but be prepared to look away and act as though you’re not really paying attention, if necessary. Picking up the signals is actually really easy; all it takes is a little practice. Get a friend to draw common objects for you, so that you can practise working out what various pen strokes usually represent. The more you do it, the easier it becomes.

- 4. Reveal the drawing.**

Like all things in mentalism, you can choose how to reveal what you know – as mind reading, precognition and so on. This particular technique lends itself very well to pretending that you can receive an image sent to you by another person.





Another example of sensory leakage is where the image of something being drawn is reflected in a pair of glasses, which the performer can easily see.

Viewing remotely

The Effect: You leave the room while someone pulls up a photo on her mobile phone, shows it to a group of people, concentrates on it and you're able to 'view' the image remotely from another room.

The Secret: You use a stooge: the whole thing is pre-arranged.

The Setup: Enlist a trustworthy friend to help you out in advance. Make sure that she has a phone with photos on it and explain what you're going to do. The secret really is that simple. But trust me, sometimes the simplest of tricks really can slay an audience (not literally, that's called mass murder!).

The Performance: While out with friends, turn the topic to ESP and how you can do it, no problem. Of course, your friends know your skills and ask you to perform something. Happy to oblige, you ask if anyone has a mobile phone with photos on it, and then you follow these steps:

1. **Look at one of your friends (the stooge) and say, 'You have some photos on your phone? Okay, great; go through them and pick out one to focus on. But don't show it to me or let anyone see it until I leave the room. I'm going to try to see what you see, so after I walk out of the room, concentrate on the picture and send me mental images.'**
2. **Start to walk out of the room as your partner in crime goes through her phone presumably to select a photo she likes.**

Stop about halfway out and say, 'You know, I'm a little tired tonight – I'm not sure this will even work. Make sure that everyone sees it, but don't say anything out loud. If you can all focus on the photo in your minds, it may help me a bit.'

3. **Stand with your back to everyone on the other side of a door, ideally with a glass pane so everyone can watch you to ensure that you don't cheat.**

You can also stand on the other side of a window or just across the room; it doesn't matter because unbeknownst (I love that word!) to everyone except your trusty sidekick, the photo is one you've seen beforehand. Your aim is simply to make sure that everyone else can see no possible way for you to have seen or heard a thing.

4. **Return to the room, stop and say, 'Have you shown everyone? Great, put your phone away; I don't want to accidentally see it.'**
5. **Reveal what you've remotely 'seen'.**

Use any method and with any flourish you like.



Fooling the best and the brightest

Many intelligent and respected people have been fooled into believing that ESP exists, even staking their reputations and careers on that false information. In the 1970s, scientists Harold E. Puthoff and Russell Targ investigated remote viewing at the Stanford Research Institute on behalf of the

US intelligence community. Like others before them, they were utterly fooled by charlatans who pretended to have psychic abilities. The government eventually pulled the plug on such programmes because it became painfully clear that the experiments were poorly controlled.

Reading minds with paranormal skills

This trick is great for performing in larger venues. If you have any aptitude as a speaker and performer, this one's a real crowd pleaser.

The Effect: You ask someone in the audience to draw any picture or symbol she fancies on a piece of paper, and then to fold it up and put it in her pocket so that nobody can see it. She then concentrates on the image, and you walk up to a flipchart with a blank piece of paper on it, turn it around away from the audience and start drawing. When finished, you ask the person to yell out what she drew. Turn the flipchart around and the images match!

What You Need: A ring-bound A5 notepad, with lined paper, a pen, a glue stick, a sharp hobby knife, a piece of cardboard, carbonless paper (or some related method for taking impressions), a flipchart and paper, a large black marker pen and an assistant.

The Secret: You use an *Imp Pad*, which captures the impression of someone's writing on a piece of paper, so that, later, you can covertly look at what's written or drawn and use it in your act.

To make an *Imp Pad*, follow these steps:

- 1. Cut out a piece of carbonless paper about 3 millimetres ($\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch) smaller than the width and height of the notepad.**

Turn to the front of the notepad and flip two pages forward, so that you're looking at the third page down from the top.

- 2. Place a piece of cardboard under the third page and cut out the middle of that page, leaving approximately a 6-millimetre ($\frac{1}{4}$ th of an inch) border.**

Run the glue stick around that border and place the carbonless paper on it, printing side down.

3. **Run the glue stick around all four edges of the opposite side (top) of the carbonless paper and flip the second page back over on top of it, sticking them together.**

The carbonless paper is sandwiched between a regular piece of paper and the one with the centre, or a window, cut out of it.



4. **Close the notepad and let it dry thoroughly.**

Put something heavy on the notepad so that the glued together pages dry flat.

5. **Check that you have your Imp Pad prepared correctly.**

From the top down is the cover, a single blank page, another page glued to the top side of carbonless paper, that page glued onto a page that's had the middle cut out of it and then the rest of the pad.

The Performance: Leave your notepad sitting in plain view with the front cover rotated to the back. Follow these steps:

1. **Choose a volunteer.**

Pick up the notepad by reaching down past the carbonless paper and nonchalantly tearing a piece of blank paper out and bringing it to the top.

Tear this piece off as if you've torn it from the front, so that it doesn't draw attention.



2. **Say to your volunteer, 'Here, take this piece of paper.'**

Look around, and continue, 'Ummm, and this notepad. I should have brought a clipboard.' Hand her the pen and take a few steps back.

3. **Deliver these lines.**

'I'd like you to think of a shape. Or a word. Or a number. It doesn't matter. Whatever comes to mind. Then write or draw it on that paper. When you've done so, fold it up and put it in your pocket. Let me know when you've done that.' When she's finished, just reach out and take the notepad and toss it on the table. Your assistant comes along and picks it up, along with the pen and other things to take off stage while you continue the presentation.

4. **Say, 'I'd like you to think about the image in your mind. Focus on it.'**

At this point, you truly have no idea what she's drawn unless you happened to read her arm movements as she drew (as I describe in the earlier section 'Using sensory leakage to simulate ESP').



5. **Turn as your assistant comes out of the stage wings with the flipchart and paper, and a large black marker pen.**

Secretly, she's peeked at the imprint of the drawing on the Imp Pad and duplicated the image three pages down on the flipchart paper by drawing it, but leaving spaces rather like a 'join the dots' picture. That way, you can redraw it by connecting the dots or spaces. She's closed the flipchart pad and brought the whole thing out.

6. **Watch as your assistant positions the flipchart and blank paper to face the audience.**

Walk up to the flipchart, take the marker pen and turn the paper around so that nobody can see what you're drawing. Act like you're focusing and begin to frantically scribble anything you like. Then, scribble it out and flip that paper over. As you do so, flip the page you're drawing on and the second page, peek at the third page and then pull the second page back over it as though you've accidentally turned too many pages. Repeat the drawing process, but this time your attempt gets closer. If, for example, the volunteer drew a house, you draw a box and some other nonsense. Scribble it out, get frustrated and flip the page over.

7. **Look at your volunteer and say, 'All right. Focus now. Just look at me. Don't say a word.'**

Return the stare and then explode with enthusiasm, saying, 'Yes. Perfect. I get it now.' Begin to redraw and scribble over what your assistant drew. Step back, take stock of your drawing and say, 'I think that's it. Yes.'

8. **Focus on the person and say, 'For the first time, say out loud what you drew.'**

She does so. Get her to take the paper out, unfold it and show it to the people in the front row to verify that she's telling the truth.

9. **Begin to turn the flipchart around and then stop in the middle of the turn.**

Reach over and pull the other two pages back on top. Then turn the flipchart fully around (the pause builds suspense). Say, 'Okay, you can see that I didn't even get close to start with.' Explain what you drew the first time, apologise for being such a poor artist and make some other self-deprecating statements. Flip to the second page and say (assuming it was a house), 'But I was starting to get a clearer impression here. You can see a box and some lines that may be bushes.' Address the woman again and say, 'What was it you drew again? Louder.' Flip the final page over and receive the applause.

Separating a deck into reds and blacks

In 1942, an amateur magician called Paul Curry invented Out of This World (OOTW), a now classic trick.

The Effect: A spectator is asked to call out whether she thinks that a face-down card being dealt is red or black. When the piles are later spread out, they're perfectly divided.

The Secret: The deck is pre-separated and, by controlling how and when the cards are dealt, you can ensure that they remain separated.

The Setup: Shift all the black cards to the top, leaving the remaining 26 red cards on the bottom. Put a mark on the back of the first red card with an ink pen that's the same colour as the back of the cards, so you can tell when you've reached the red section.

The Performance: Ask a volunteer to pick out a card from the top half of the pre-separated deck – of course, it's black – and then follow these steps:

1. Ask her to guess what it is, even though it doesn't matter.

Whatever she says, turn it over face up to show that it's black. Say, 'Okay, you have the black cards.' Pull out a red card from the deck and place it face up to indicate your pile.

2. Say that you're going to deal the cards off the top, one at a time, and ask her to tell you which pile to put it on based on what she thinks the card is.

If she thinks that a card's red, put it face down on your pile. If she thinks that it's black, put it face down on her pile. Carry on until you see the red card with the mark on its back and then stop.

At that point, all the cards on the top of the two face-up cards on the table are black.

3. Ask your volunteer to pick out a card from your remaining deck, which of course is going to be red.

Say, 'All right, you've picked a red card, so let's change things a bit. We'll put that here.'

4. Drop the card face up on top of her pile.

Reach into her pile somewhere and pull out one of the black cards, saying, 'Let's see if you've got any right so far. Ah, yep, good job. I'll use that to start my new deck.' Drop it on top of your deck of cards.



5. **Hand the person the deck and ask her to deal off one card at a time, face down, to whatever pile she thinks matches the colour.**



Your new section is black and her new section is red. You've switched. Let the person deal out all the cards. Here's the thing: the volunteer's pile is alright because all of the first set of cards are black and all of the second set are red. Your pile, however, is just the opposite.

6. **Ask your volunteer to take her pile, square it up and turn it over.**



As she's doing so, square up your pile and turn over the deck except for the red card on the bottom. Now that you've done that, all your cards are separated correctly. Spread your pile out and get her to do the same. Reach into your spread and flip over the one upside-down card and tell her to do the same thing with her spread; all the cards are now separated.

Seeing While Blind (Apparently)

As a child, did you ever play Blind Man's Buff in which the person who's 'it' wears a blindfold and gropes around attempting to grab the other players? Well, in many respects, the tricks I describe in this section are an advanced version of this game. So treat them as such and have fun; but be careful who you grab – that can get you into trouble!

Discovering different types of blindfolds

Blindfolds are generally made of fabric, although I do actually produce and sell a stainless steel one to mentalists all over the world. In all cases, blindfolds are worn to 'prove' to an audience that you can't possibly see anything that's going on, so that when you duplicate drawings or drive a car you must be using some other paranormal skill or ability. In fact, the blindfold is usually directly gimmicked or somehow circumvented by lifting it off the bridge of the nose to create a space to see, for instance.

Real blindfolds

A real blindfold is just that: one that's ungimmicked and you really can't see through it.



Depending on the type of real blindfold you use – such as a rolled-up bandana, a folded piece of fabric, a purpose-made one and so on – you may find yourself able to see down your nose or from the chest down and onto tables. If you can peek, however, I count the blindfold as gimmicked (which I cover in the next section on 'Gimmicked blindfolds'). When wearing a real blindfold, you have to rely on some other way to tell what's happening, such as your sense of hearing, smell or touch. For this reason, make sure that a blindfold never covers your ears.

Making your own blindfold

To make an ungimmicked blindfold, use double-folded velvet or a similar fabric, measuring about 10 centimetres (4 inches) deep and around 20–25 centimetres (8–10 inches) long. (Of course, the precise size depends on how big your hooter is!) I prefer black fabric because it suggests that the blindfold is completely opaque, but some mentalists prefer to choose fabrics that suit their personality, character or act. Simply turn over and stitch a hem at the top and bottom and connect the two ends with a piece of elastic.

If you can't sew, consider buying a how-to book or DVD or perhaps even taking a class. If you get really into mentalism, you'll find yourself sewing a lot and the more skills you develop for designing and producing your own equipment and props, the better because you end up with good quality, custom-made one-offs that nobody else has. Of course, if you don't have the time, aptitude or interest, you can get a seamstress or tailor to run up stuff for you based on your own designs.

For performances, I like to use the 'sleeping mask' kind of blindfold, sometimes provided by airlines, or available in chemists or beauty salons. These blindfolds tend to have a simple elastic strap at the back, which allows you to get them on and off very easily. Another benefit is that audiences are familiar with their shape and look, which adds credibility. You can't see anything with this kind, not even down the nose, unless you remove the little 'light' flaps of material that are typically sewn into the nose area.

Gimmicked blindfolds

I consider any eye covering that isn't a real blindfold to be gimmicked or faked; in other words, it has some function or detail that allows you to peek one way or another. Gimmicked blindfolds come in all shapes, sizes and flavours, with plenty of commercially produced versions lining the shelves of bricks and mortar and virtual magic shops. But you can also make your own (nothing beats being self-sufficient!).

Reversible blindfolds

I'm a big fan of the reversible blindfold, which seen from one side appears (to an audience member) like a real blindfold but from the other allows you to see through it. You can buy ready-made ones, but here's how to produce a much higher quality one on your own:

- 1. Buy some black, see-through fabric about 10 centimetres (4 inches) deep and as long as required to fit around your noggin.**

A fine silk or nylon works well, but you may find an alternative if you take a look around a fabric shop. Just make sure that people looking at you can't see through it when the blindfold is on your face. (They shouldn't be able to see your eyes when standing in front of you.)



2. Secure the two ends with elastic.

Use single-thickness material so that you can see through the entire blindfold.

The key to making a reversible blindfold work is simple. When you've made your single thickness blindfold, take another strip of fabric about 5 centimetres (2 inches) deep and sew it into the inside of the blindfold, so that if that side is up and placed over someone's eyes, the person can't see through it. But when you reverse the orientation (that is, turn it over) the thin side can be seen through. When showing a member of the audience the blindfold, you simply place the thick side over the person's eyes and have her verify that it's legitimate.

Folded blindfolds

The folded blindfold is a classic prop, and requires no sewing. You just need a 45-centimetre (18-inch) square of silk or nylon that you can see through in a single layer. All you have to do is fold it properly, and you're ready to go. Follow these steps:

1. Lay the material diagonally across a table with one pointed side of a square nearest you and one directly across on the other side.
2. Fold over the side nearest you about 5 centimetres (2 inches) toward the opposite side.
3. Repeat this fold on the opposite side, coming toward you, and then again on the side closest to you, and then the opposite side, alternating until both sides are folded and nearing each other.
4. Leave a small space in the middle that's a single layer of fabric, which you can see through. All you have to do is place it over your eyes and tie the back.

Bag blindfolds

A bag blindfold adds drama to a performance because it looks as though your volunteer is being kidnapped or escorted by the hangman.

My favourite bag (and I own several) is very similar in design to the reversible blindfold, except that you turn the entire bag around to allow you to see through one side that isn't as thick. These bags can be made in the same way as a reversible blindfold, or you can buy them from magic shops. See the section "Reversible blindfolds" earlier in this chapter for more information.



The great advantage of the bag is that it doesn't need to be tied; you just pull it on over your head and work your magic.

Coins, dough and bandages

The more you get into mentalism, the more bizarre ideas you come across (not only in relation to blindfolds, but in general!). Some of the ideas border on sheer lunacy because performers go out of their way to convince the audience that they can't see. Some of these items include:

- ✓ **Coins:** I know a mentalist who uses large coins, like a 50p piece, that have been shimmed (a thin ferrous piece of metal is placed inside a non-ferrous coin) by a machinist so they're attracted to magnets sewn into a standard-looking blindfold. To see, he scrunches his eyes shut as the blindfold is being tightened in the back, then, when he raises the muscles in his forehead, the coins lift off and he can see down his nose to peek.
- ✓ **Dough:** For decades, mentalists have been putting bread dough over their eyes, in strips or in the shape of biscuits. I never quite get that. After all, dough is wet, sloppy and sticky. Sure, it gives the impression that you can't see, but I think it's overkill and incredibly messy – when you're done, you have to clean up.
- ✓ **Bandages:** Bandages have also been a reoccurring theme over time. I do see how wrapping gauze around your head like a 3,000-year-old Egyptian mummy probably convinces people that you're as blind as a bat, but it's a lot of work.



To pull off a dynamic, convincing and ultimately entertaining sightless vision routine, all you need is a standard-looking blindfold and superb performance skills.

Performing with sightless vision

When wearing a gimmicked blindfold, remember always to act blindfolded. If you're not careful you can easily forget, and audiences quickly pick up on movements that give away that you're cheating.



If you really want to discover how to act as if you can't see, watch some videos of artists who were actually blind. For instance, I studied footage of legendary musician Ray Charles and Jamie Foxx's portrayal of him in the film *Ray*.

The Effect: You're blindfolded. After a suitable build up, you get someone to shuffle a deck of cards. An audience member chooses a card and shows it to the audience so that you can 'look through their eyes' to see the card. With your back turned, you reveal the card.

The Secret: I came up with this routine when I was 14 years old, and have used it off and on ever since. I bought my first Deland deck, get this, from a vending machine in Southern California when I was 12. I still have the deck today, a bit the worse for wear, but otherwise still useable.

What makes a Deland deck so useful is that it's both *marked* (printed with marks that you can use to identify the suit and value of a card) and a *stripper* (which means it's tapered along one long side; see Chapter 5 for more). While visiting friends at a local Society of American Magicians (SAM) meeting (SAM was founded by Harry Houdini and is the oldest magic organisation in the US), one of the club members performed a blindfold routine and forced a card (something I describe in Chapter 5).

I thought that it would be pretty cool to add a free choice to the trick, so the audience didn't think that anything strange was going on. To me, the routine was made more believable by spreading the cards face down on a table and allowing someone to mix them up and take one. I borrowed money from my mother and got my first blindfold that week and tried it out at school.

The Performance: Show the audience the blindfold and explain that you want to try an experiment called 'sightless vision', in which you may be able to look through their eyes to see. Follow these steps:

- 1. Put on the blindfold and take out the cards.**
- 2. Ask someone to shuffle the deck and then spread the cards face down on a table.**
- 3. Get your volunteer to mix them up, touch one card, slide it out and put it to the side.**
- 4. Ask her to collect all the other cards and to reassemble the deck for you.**

When she puts the deck back together, glimpse the back of the card and read the mark on it to identify what it is, and then turn away from the table before she even picks it up.

- 5. Ask your volunteer to pick up the card while your back is turned and to show it to the audience.**

Ask the people who saw it to concentrate and focus, and when you're ready, announce what the card is.

Walking while blindfolded

A *blindfold walk* involves being blindfolded and then attempting to find a hidden object. In the music hall days, mediums often pulled off this trick. They left the room and someone hid an object. Then, they grasped the person by the wrist to read her thoughts. Ultimately, they walked through rooms, up- or downstairs, perhaps even down the street to an entirely different location. All in all the routine is pretty powerful if done properly.

The best way to perform this trick is to use an accomplice who's in the room when the item is hidden and can then feed you information. If you use a gimmicked blindfold, ask the person to 'tell' you where the item is by using a previously worked out *physical code* (a way to communicate without speaking by using body movements). If you want to use an ungimmicked blindfold, consider using an electronic vibration device called a *thumper* (flip to Chapter 14 for more) so your friend can electronically notify you when you're headed in the right direction.

Chapter 11

Travelling Back to the Future: Making Accurate Predictions

In This Chapter

- ▼ Becoming properly equipped to make predictions
- ▼ Predicting with envelopes and dice
- ▼ Anticipating at a moment's notice
- ▼ Working ancient practices into your act

Nothing impresses like an uncannily accurate prediction. They're so powerful that I lace them throughout this book and dedicate this entire chapter to the subject. Hands down, if you can't do any other effect, the ones I'm about to show you need to be at the top of your list.

Of course, mentalists don't really predict anything; they simply force what they already know on people and then create a presentation that gives the appearance of an accurate prediction. In this chapter, I expose some previously protected techniques for making predictions. I describe the equipment you need and how to predict on the hoof. I also suggest a few ancient methods that you may want to incorporate into your act.

Gathering the Tools of the Trade

Mentalists use a lot of different tools, gimmicks, props and the like to create wonder, shock and awe in the minds of their audiences. To effect predictions, you need to acquaint yourself with the staple pieces of equipment that I describe in this section. (Envelopes are so important that I give them their own section 'Exciting an Audience with Envelope Effects' later in this chapter.)

As I describe in Chapter 14, one of the easiest 'tools' to help create the illusion of an accurate prediction is getting some secret help from a co-conspirator (just don't refer to your friend as a 'tool'!).



Sharing the future

Prediction effects are real reputation makers. The reason is simple: people's futures are utterly uncertain. They know where they've been, where they are right now but have absolutely no idea where they'll be in the future.

Because human beings are inherently control freaks, they've been trying to come up with

ways to predict the future ever since they first scrawled 'Kilroy was here!' in a cave with a piece of dinosaur dung. Despite gazing at animal innards, 'reading' tea leaves, using tarot cards and crystal balls and calling on every known deity, they've never been able to find a reliable way to do it. That's why such mentalism effects are so intriguingly cool.

Boxing clever with gimmicked chests

Industrious mentalists have built many different types of prediction chests over the years, some of which are inexpensive and others cost thousands of pounds. All cases, however, are built to do the same thing: allow you to secretly 'load' a prediction in whatever form you like right in front of people watching you, so the prediction appears to be inside, secured and protected all along.



Joe Porper in California makes one of the best chests. Made from machined aluminium, it has a hasp and padlock on the front creating the impression that it's safer than Fort Knox. In reality, it has a secret panel for loading whatever you need for your act.

Covering your options with indexes

An *index* is a device or prop that provides the opportunity of multiple *outs* (options) to use during a performance to create the impression of a correct prediction.

Think of the slots in a wallet for separate credit cards. Most mentalist indexes are similarly designed to hold notes, cards and so on in a known order that you can easily access. They can be handmade with cardboard or even strong tape to fit under a jacket or in your pocket.



You can also use your body as an index by placing various items in different pockets.

Impressing your audience with devices

As the name implies, *impression devices* are gimmicks that covertly duplicate someone's writing or drawing by creating an 'impression' of the original, allowing you to secretly access the information (check out Chapter 7 to see these devices in action). You use impression devices, such as clipboards and carbon paper, to see what an audience member draws, replicate it and then furtively insert the copy into a sealed envelope, prediction chest or other seemingly protected place.

Working with magic wallets

You can buy countless magic wallets specifically designed to allow you to peek things written down and to index notes and cards. Some wallets even have all kinds of creative devices actually built into them. Jerry O'Connell is a really talented maker of magic wallets.

You can buy a magic wallet in your local magic shop, have one custom made or even sew one yourself.



For the cost of some pre-made magic wallets, you can invest in a sewing machine and all the necessary parts to make a magic wallet from scratch: just contact a leather supplier via the Internet.

Using billet knives

A *billet knife* allows you to insert a *billet* (a small slip of paper with something written on it) covertly into an envelope when you're opening it up. Most billet knives are purpose-built in the shape of a letter opener, but you can also purchase pens and other devices that do the trick just as well.

Writing secretly with the Swami Gimmick

The *Swami Gimmick* allows you to write secretly and is incredibly useful for making predictions (see Chapter 6 for more on using this gimmick).

Cheating with gimmicked dice

Casinos don't allow you to bring your own dice to a game for good reason: cheaters have invented some very innocent-looking dice sets that are

anything but. And such cheating isn't new: *Mahabharata*, an ancient Hindu text, mentions *crooked* (as in not straight) dice. Here are some examples of popular gimmicked dice:



- ✓ **Loaded dice** are heavier on a given side so they have a tendency to fall on a particular number.
- ✓ **Floater dice** are lighter on a given side so they too will tend to fall on a particular number set, opposite the light side.
- ✓ **Percentage dice** are designed to increase the chances that a given number falls, but don't guarantee it.

Scores of creative dice designs exist, from those with raised spots to those that create suction on flat surfaces and so slow the rolled dice down. You can find dice with bevels, raised-edges, cut-edges, razor-edges, saw-teeth, bricks, and flat passers, as well as capped dice, slick dice and even *electronic dice* that stick to an electromagnet hidden under a table.

Removing free choice with force bags

Force bags are a really versatile prop and do exactly what it says on the tin: they allow you to force an object on someone. For mentalist purposes, that item is normally a slip of paper or a card.



Although it appears to be a see-through bag, a *force bag* has a divider in the middle that creates two separate pockets. On one side you put slips of paper that you can pull out at random and show to be all different; on the other side, you have slips that are all the same. During most presentations, you pull out two or three different slips and get people to read them out as examples. When the time comes for an audience member to 'choose' one slip of paper presumably at random, you arrange the bag so that he reaches into the side containing the duplicate slips of paper. Because you're guaranteed to know what was picked, your prediction is always correct.

Performing with gimmicked decks of cards

Aside from forcing a card by using sleight of hand with a normal deck, you can also use specially prepared decks for this line of tricks (check out Chapter 5 for lots more card illusions). Here are just five gimmicked decks:

- ✓ **Invisible deck:** This deck comprises rough and smooth cards that look the same but are easy to identify by touch. (Chapter 5 has the lowdown on making your own invisible deck.)

- ✓ **Monte Cristo deck:** Probably one of the most versatile decks ever made. Allegedly invented by Henry Hardin at the turn of the twentieth century, it's made of 52 regular cards that are specially printed and two regular jokers. It can be shuffled, spread and handled fairly. As a result of the special printing, a spectator can 'look at any card' in the deck and you can recognise it in advance.
- ✓ **One-way forcing deck:** One of my favourites, this deck takes advantage of people's tendencies to make assumptions (check out Chapter 1 for more details). The deck comprises identical cards, perhaps with the exception of one at the bottom and one at the top.
- ✓ **Svengali deck:** This deck is self-working and requires no skill at all; it's virtually a no-brainer for forcing a known card on someone. It's constructed of 26 duplicate cards and 26 standard cards altered to make an entire deck.
- ✓ **Telomatic deck:** A great deck because you can riffle-shuffle it face up. Based on the Monte Cristo deck design, this deck is produced by gluing duplicate cards to the back of regular cards instead of using specially printed cards. Like the Svengali deck, it has duplicate force cards running alternately throughout. Nathan Kranzo (www.hismagic.com) produces an excellent telomatic deck and a brilliant training DVD.



You can also use a marked deck in combination with a loaded prediction chest or envelope (see the earlier 'Boxing clever with gimmicked chests' section for more info). You have hundreds of gimmicked decks to choose from; just look around and find one that you're comfortable using.

The tossed-out deck is great for predictions and telepathy routines (lots of varieties exist; I describe one in the 'Tossing out a spot-on prediction' section later in this chapter and another in Chapter 17). Few tricks are as clean, direct and utterly unexplainable as the one I describe here. With nothing more than an ordinary deck of cards and your own wallet, you can perform a feat of extra-sensory perception that defies logic.

The Effect: You ask a volunteer to think of a card from a normal deck of 52 playing cards. The person visualises the suit, colour and value in his mind's eye. You reach into your pocket, pull out your wallet and show him the one card that you predicted he'd pick.

The Secret: You have an index of 16 cards in your wallet that, when combined with clever patter (and a written 'out'), allows you to appear to have predicted the choice.

The Setup: From a red-backed standard deck of playing cards remove all the 3s, 6s, 9s and queens. With a black marker pen, write 'off by one!' on the backs of all 16 selected cards (you use a red deck because the black pen shows up nicely on the cards, whereas it doesn't on darker coloured deck).

These cards give you a one in three chance of correctly identifying whatever card the person names. In other words, the 3s cover the 2s and 4s, the 6s cover the 5s and 7s, the 9s cover the eights and 10s, and so on. This 'off by one' ploy covers all the cards except the aces and jokers, which you eliminate during the patter.

The real question is where you put all the cards. I use a regular wallet that folds in half, as do most mentalists I know. I put the red cards on one side and the black cards on the other. The wallet I use has three distinct dividers for cash, so I can position 12 cards easily, while leaving only four to go into other areas.



I perform with the person on my left because, when I hold the wallet open in my left hand, the cash dividers are facing to the right. I also specifically use bridge-sized playing cards to reduce the size and bulk of my wallet. I have a good friend who uses miniature cards, which I thought was a pretty unique idea, but having the larger cards in your wallet adds to the illusion that you can't possibly have an entire deck in there.



Whatever type of cards you use and wherever you place them, you need to be able to pull the right card from the right location without having to look at the wallet as you do so.

Follow these steps:

1. Choose a volunteer and say, 'I want you to imagine a deck of cards in your hands. Pull out the jokers, so you can see all 52 cards. But don't pick an ace because that's the most commonly chosen card in the entire deck. Just focus on an entirely random card; whatever pops into your mind.'

2. Give the person a minute to think about it and then ask him what the card is.

Imagine he says the 5 of hearts.

3. Now say, 'That's interesting. For some reason, this morning I just felt compelled to bring this one card with me. I grabbed a deck and pulled it out.'

If the volunteer names a card that's in your wallet, that's a direct hit and you're good to go. But you can have much more fun if he names a card you don't have. For example, if the volunteer names a 5, say, 'It looks like I was off. You said the 5 of hearts, and I have the 6 of hearts.' Pause for a second; he'll be sort of impressed, but not really.

4. And then say, 'but as you can see, I knew I'd be off by one so I wrote it in advance on the back of the card.' Flip the card over and show him the note, which really will impress him.

Exciting an Audience with Envelope Effects

I dedicate a whole section on the use of envelopes because of their diversity, cheapness, commonness and familiarity.

Creating a secret envelope slot

You can gimmick any envelope by simply cutting a slot in the back through which you can write on a piece of paper or a card using a Swami Gimmick (see the earlier section 'Writing secretly with the Swami Gimmick' as well as Chapter 6 for more details).

Owning your own omniloop

You can do so many different effects with the *omniloop* that I almost need to dedicate an entire chapter to it. To make your own, you need to buy a box of medium weight, bright white, window envelopes from your local stationary shop. Depending on your needs, you can use standard-sized envelopes for close-up work and small groups or larger ones for using on stage. You also need 10 or 12 copies of the same magazine.

Here's how to make your own omniloop:



1. **Take a piece of white paper and cut it so it perfectly fits inside the envelope.**

This piece of paper acts as a divider. You can cut the back off an envelope and use it if you're pressed for supplies.

Don't use card or textured paper; the paper needs to look and feel like part of the envelope.

2. **Create the front side.**

What you place in front of the white divider (which can be seen through the window) is up to you. For now, cut 10 to 12 big words from a magazine in different shapes, fonts, sizes and colours. Use interesting words so they stand out. Take a glue stick and tack the words down on the paper divider, so the words look as if they're just randomly mixed inside, and place the divider inside the envelope facing outward through the window. Toss three more loose words in on that side so that when you move the envelope all the words appear to be loose.

3. Finish the envelope.

Ensure that the paper divider lines up perfectly with the crease in the envelope near the flap. You can glue it down or simply tape it at that spot so the divider isn't touched when someone puts his hand inside. Finally, toss in the set of duplicate force words you prepared earlier and you're ready to go.

The Effect: You've probably figured out by now that this prop is a homemade force bag in the form of a common envelope (I describe force bags in the earlier section 'Removing free choice with force bags'). You just predict the force word, which makes this trick as easy as pie to perform.

The Performance: Recruit a volunteer. Explain that you have an envelope full of random words cut from a magazine, and you want him to help you out. Take a business card out of your wallet and on the back of it write the force word; place it face down on the table. Say something like, 'I'd like to try something with you if you don't mind; I'm going to write down something that's been on my mind. I've been getting an impression of a word for some reason, but I don't want you to look at it just yet.'

While making the envelope is the hardest part of this trick, the next challenge is getting your volunteer to 'randomly' choose a word. Making him choose the word from behind his back is best to make sure that he doesn't cheat or appear to help you out. Follow these steps:

- 1. Ask your volunteer to put his hands behind his back. Go behind him and hand him the envelope, flap side up. Say, 'I'd like you to reach your hand inside, take only one of the words and then close the flap. When you've done that, keep the hand holding the word behind your back and hand me back the envelope. It's important that nobody, not even you, sees the word yet. Do you understand?'**

He does as you ask. Cleverly, because of the way you've made the envelope, he can only grab one of the force words.

- 2. Reveal your prediction.**

Continue with, 'You have just one word in your hand, correct?' (If he has two by some strange stroke of bad luck, get him to select one and crumple the other up before bringing his hands to the front.) 'Now, as you know, I wrote down a prediction on the back of my business card and placed it on the table. I'm going to show it to you and I want you to read it out loud for everyone.' He does so.

- 3. Ask him to produce his word. Say, 'I'd like you to bring your word out – the one you chose earlier – so that everyone can see it. Please read it out loud.'**

Of course, it will match your prediction.

Predicting a headline

I can't even begin to count how many 'headline prediction' tricks exist. From custom-made rosewood and mahogany chests, with secret trap doors that allow you to load a prediction after the fact, to gaudy rhinestone-encrusted glass boxes that may once have adorned Liberace's mantelpiece, there's something out there for every taste and budget.

The trick in this section is modern, inexpensive, easy to perform and suits my particular style.

The Effect: The basic premise for this headline prediction is like most of the renditions of this kind of trick: You put a prediction in a small envelope, close it with evidence tape and then seal it inside a tamper-resistant evidence bag. When the envelope is opened, you've predicted a future event correctly.

The Secret: Using a thumb tip, you secretly load the 'protected' envelope right under everyone's nose at exactly the same time as you appear to be revealing the prediction to them. I'm not kidding; it only takes a millisecond to do. The real convincer is the notarised prediction document, but you also modify that retrospectively. Come on now, you didn't really think it was magic, did you?

What You Need: A roll of red forensic tamper-indicating serrated evidence tape and some small tamper-resistant evidence bags, which you can buy online from www.packsafeproducts.co.uk. You also need some small manila payslip envelopes, a *soft* thumb tip, a pen, a pair of scissors, a couple of pieces of paper and some double-sided clear tape.

The Performance: Bring that day's newspaper to your performance, together with your notarised prediction, but don't show them to anyone yet. Keep the face of the newspaper hidden and act as though it has nothing to do with your act . . . for the moment. Have your thumb tip ready to go with the slip of paper containing the correct 'prediction' in it.

The Setup: In my experience, too many headline predictions, and indeed many mentalism effects in general, are overly complicated and feel contrived. But right off the bat you notice how ridiculously simple this one is:

1. **Arrange all your supplies on a table in front of you.**
2. **Cut a piece of paper about the same size as a business card, write a random prediction on it and fold it in quarters.**
3. **Put a tiny piece of double-sided tape on the paper, place it down into the bottom of the envelope and press on it so it sticks.**

You do this to prevent it falling out by accident when you do a switch in the middle of the performance.

4. Take a 5-centimetre (2-inch) strip of evidence tape and place it over the flap of the payslip envelope.

Don't seal the flap shut by licking the glue: an evidence sticker does the trick. You can use standard tape if you like, but I don't recommend it unless you're in a pinch. The evidence tape allows you to open the flap more easily, prevents any struggle later while wearing a thumb tip, and clearly shows if someone has tampered with the envelope. Make up another identical envelope but, after sealing it, open it up again and 'bow' it open.

5. Place the first envelope in the bag.

Also drop a quick note on a card on the opposite of the taped side of the envelope that reads 'Notice: DO NOT open this envelope!' Set the second envelope aside. You post or hand the sealed evidence bag to a person helping you with directions after you get your prediction document notarised.

6. Create the notarised prediction document.

On a standard piece of lined writing paper, print the following:

I, [your name], do hereby predict that the headline on the front page of [the newspaper] on [date]

Don't punctuate the end because you need to fill in the details later (you need to use the same pen, so don't lose it!).

Leave two line spaces and print your name. Then draw a large diagonal slash across the rest of the page and write 'Nothing Further' under it. At the top of the page write the number printed on the evidence bag, if one exists. Take the page out because you need to get it notarised as a copy.

You now have to go to the office of a notary public. Most notaries are also solicitors and you can find one on the website of the Law Society at: www.lawsociety.org.uk. The job of the notary isn't to question what's going on; just to stamp the document. If the notary requires a description for the records, say it's a prediction. Don't make a big deal about it or go into any back-story, otherwise the person is more likely to remember you later on. You want to keep things fuzzy so if anyone ever goes to talk to the person, such as a reporter, the notary isn't likely to remember anything and defers to the notes, which most likely say 'prediction' and list your name. Perfect. Be sure to make a copy of the prediction when it's been notarised for your records.

7. Send the sealed prediction in the evidence bag to the VIP.

Keep the notarised document with you until the day of the performance. Instruct the VIP to safeguard the evidence bag and to not open it until



you get there. Don't tell the VIP what you're going to predict in advance; keep the entire trick a secret.

8. On the day of the performance, buy a newspaper.

Buy that day's paper and find a story that really stands out.

Never pick a crime or anything that you can be questioned about. You don't want the police arriving on your doorstep asking some tough questions. Also stay away from disasters such as plane crashes – if you predicted such a thing, why didn't you warn anyone? You don't need the biggest headline, just something unique. The next step is the fun part.

9. Write down your 'prediction' at the end of the sentence on the notarised document, using the *same* pen (also make sure the document is resting on the *same* surface as last time). Put a full stop at the end of the sentence.

See how devilishly clever that is? I've performed this trick for years and people are always absolutely dumb-founded. Verifying a trick with an 'official' document really seems beyond the realms of trickery to most people. That detail is what really makes the entire illusion.

10. Take a small piece of plain white paper about the same size as a business card and write the same prediction on it.

Fold it in quarters and slip it into your thumb tip. Put it on your thumb to ensure that it fits properly and doesn't show.

Put a small pair of scissors in your outside jacket pocket with the thumb tip; that way, you can cut open the bag and put the thumb tip on as you ditch the scissors. In the left jacket pocket, put the duplicate 'opened' payslip envelope. Proceed as follows:

11. Ask the VIP for the sealed evidence bag; inspect it yourself and also verify with the VIP that it hasn't been tampered with.

Make a big point about inspecting the bag and casually show that your hands are empty, but don't call attention to them. You just want to make sure that everyone knows your hands are clean. If you're wearing a long-sleeve shirt, casually slide the sleeves up as an extra convincer.

12. Remove the scissors from your pocket and trim off the top of the evidence bag cleanly.

Put the scissors back and secretly put on the thumb tip.

13. Hold the bag in front of you with your left hand.

Reach in with the hand wearing the thumb tip, your thumb toward you, and pull out the payslip envelope with the red evidence tape facing everyone watching. You're now holding the payslip envelope with your thumb on the front.



14. Discard the evidence bag with your left hand and reach over and flick the flap open, tearing the tape.

Switch hands by using your left hand to 'bow' the envelope and reach in with your thumb so that the thumb tip is totally out of sight. Let the audience clearly and see you slowly pulling the paper from the envelope between your thumb and index finger only.



The random prediction is still inside the payslip envelope, and you don't want anyone to see it. (You keep it there in case the VIP opens the evidence bag before the performance: at worst, it shows that you made a legitimate attempt and failed; at best, you get something right and everyone, including you, is truly amazed!) Nonchalantly put the payslip envelope in your left jacket pocket next to an extra empty one. No-one's ever asked to see the payslip, but I always have a second one just in case the first has the thumb tip lodged inside it.

15. Ask a volunteer to read the small slip out loud.

Then hand someone the notarised document *before* turning over the newspaper to applause all round.

Tossing out a spot-on prediction

This trick is a variation on the tossed-out deck trick (see the earlier section 'Performing with gimmicked decks of cards' and Chapter 17), in which a deck of cards held together by rubber bands is gently thrown out into an audience and three volunteers are asked to take a random peek at one card each. The deck is collected and the performer names all three cards, much to the astonishment of everyone watching. Here, I offer up this classic trick as a prediction rather than a feat of telepathy.

The Effect: You present an envelope to your audience and leave it in plain view. You then produce a deck of cards and proceed to toss it out to a member of the audience. He peeks at one card and then tosses it to someone else, who does the same. Finally, a third person catches the deck, peeks at a single card and throws it back to you. Each person is asked to remain standing while you show the contents of the envelope to the audience. You announce three cards out loud, and they match the three that the audience members selected.

The Setup: You need to create your own three-way forcing deck, consisting of three sets of 17 duplicate cards and two indifferent cards. You can buy a pre-made deck at a magic shop or construct your own from 17 brand new decks of cards (the second option is a bit more labour intensive!). For the purpose of instruction, I presume that you decide to do it the hard way.



Open up the 17 decks and pull three cards out of each into three separate piles of 17 cards: for example, the 9 of spades, the jack of hearts and the 5 of diamonds. Repeat this process until you exhaust each pile. That is, place down the 9 of spades, the jack of hearts and the 5 of diamonds. Do it again. When you run out, place an indifferent card on the top and bottom of the deck. That gives you a deck of 53 cards (17 of each card plus the one on top and bottom), but nobody knows but you. Wrap a couple of rubber bands tightly around the deck about 2.5 centimetres (1 inch) from the top, and another two about the same distance from the bottom. That's it, you're done.

The Performance: Pay attention to the subtleties in the following steps:

1. Bring out an envelope.

Inside is a piece of paper clearly printed in text large enough for someone to read even if he needs reading glasses; it says, 'Please keep a poker face. If I call out your card, do absolutely nothing. Stand perfectly still.' On the back it reads, 'If I called out your card, please sit down.' This envelope remains sealed, but in plain view for the entire performance.

2. Address the audience.

Say, 'I've got an envelope here. I'm going to place it in plain view so you can keep an eye on it. We'll come back to it later.'

You can leave it there and then come back to it after your other tricks, because people forget about, which adds to the impact when you finally use it as a reveal.



3. Bring out the deck and say, 'I've got a deck of cards here.'

Make sure you let the bottom card flash because it's an indifferent card and not one of the main three you're working with. Continue, 'I'm going to gently toss this deck out to one of you. When I do, you're going to take it like this, peek at one card and let it snap shut. Don't let anyone else see your card. But you must commit it to memory. Then, I'll ask the first person to gently toss the deck over to someone else.'

Demonstrate holding the cards in your left hand and pulling down sharply somewhere in the middle of the deck to peek at a single card. Be very clear and deliberate about your actions because you don't want anyone to riffle from the top down because they'll be able to see that the cards repeat.

4. Pick someone not too far away and make sure that he understands what you've asked him to do.

When you toss the deck out to him, do it gently and underhand so that it arcs. Don't throw it like a baseball pitcher or a cricket bowler. The last thing you want to do is hit an audience member in the face!

When he has the deck, walk him through what you want him to do, if necessary, by repeating the directions. Then ask him to remain standing

and pick someone else to toss the deck to. Instruct this second person to also stand, and get the first person to toss it gently, just as you did, to the second person. Repeat the directions and walk the second person through the peek, ensuring that he keeps the card perfectly hidden. Finally, get the second person to pick a third person, and repeat the process.

5. Retrieve the deck by walking down and getting it or ask the third person to toss it back up to you.

Inject a bit of humour by asking the third person to toss the deck to you but then appearing to be unable to reach it and allowing the deck to fall on the floor. Simply stare right at him and say nothing for a second or two. This pause often gets a nice laugh from the audience. Again, be sure to instruct the three helpers to stay on their feet.

6. Address everyone again.

Say, 'Okay, we've had three people each pick a single card at random. And I've never met any of them, correct?' They affirm what you say. Continue, 'All right, if this goes badly, then I'm happy to grovel and apologise. But if it goes well, I'm not shy about accepting thunderous applause and spontaneous standing ovations.' Pause for a second and stare at everyone with a big smile on your face.

7. Ask a fourth person to help you wind everything up.

Pick someone near the front and ask him to join you at the end of the stage. Walk over and clearly pick up the envelope, keeping it in plain view the whole time. Tear off the top and hand the paper inside to the fourth person. Say, 'I'd like you to read this out loud to everyone please. Be clear and project your voice!' Make sure that the person reads the first side first. Afterwards, tell him to turn it over and read the second side. With that, the three audience members who peeked at cards sit down together. Prompted by your earlier comments, the audience usually roars with applause.

Predicting on the Fly

You can perform the prediction tricks in this section anywhere, at any time and with almost anything.

Fighting a battle royale

This trick is the mentalist's version of Rock, Paper, Scissors.

The Effect: You play the game with three historical figures and accurately predict who wins.

The Secret: This trick works as a result of a paradox in probability theory involving transitivity – that is, when A is related to B and B is related to C (as outlined in Martin Gardner's *The Colossal Book of Mathematics*). At first it seems a little confusing, but this trick is quite easy to perform when you understand it. Follow these steps:

1. Remove six business cards from your wallet.

Write the word 'Rock' on the first card, 'Paper' on the second and 'Scissors' on the third; these are your weapon cards. Write the name of a famous historical figure on the fourth, fifth and sixth cards, respectively: say, Alexander the Great, Bobby Moore and Charlie Chaplin; these are your warrior cards.

I specifically choose first names beginning with A, B and C so that I can easily remember the sequence.

2. Place the warrior cards about 5 centimetres (2 inches) apart in a row.

Put Alex on your right, Bobby in the middle and Charlie on the left.

3. Lay the weapon cards down so that Alex beats Bobby beats Charlie.

This means that the Scissor card is in front of Alex, the Paper card is in front of Bobby and the Rock card is in front of Charlie on the left. In other words, Scissors beats Paper, which beats Rock. From this starting point, you know that A beats B beats C, going from right to left when laid out in front of you, as follows:

ROCK	PAPER	SCISSORS
CHARLIE	BOBBY	ALEX

If you switch or change your choice of any two items (switch warriors or switch weapons), you reverse the cycle of victory so that C beats B beats A, as follows:

ROCK	PAPER	SCISSORS
BOBBY	CHARLIE	ALEX

You must bear in mind how many switches take place. Starting with the ABC configuration, you know that A beats B beats C. One switch of either the warriors or weapons = CBA, two switches = ABC, three switches = CBA and so on. In all cases, the configuration is ABC or CBA, no matter how many times each is switched, so long as you only switch two from a category at a given time.



Obviously, you can use any names you fancy or indeed any item to represent the warriors. You can even use a real rock, piece of paper and set of scissors. When you understand the concept, you can modify the presentation. In terms of mentalism, this game utilises your ability to properly and accurately predict what others choose; you can thus win beyond the norms of probability.

Calling a tossed coin

Before pretty much every major sports game, a coin is flipped in the air and called to determine who starts. But, did you know that several nearly sure-fire ways exist for you to win at heads or tails?

First, you need to know the coin you want to use. For example, the American quarter is smooth on the heads' side and rougher on the tails' side. When you flip it in the air, you can

catch it with your hand and gently rub it with your thumb to identify which side is up. You then call out whether it's heads or tails and reveal you've won.

A statistically less dependable method is to spin the coin on a table and slam your hand down on top of it. Although you can't feel what side is up, calling tails is the safe bet because most coins fall on tails about 80 per cent of the time.

Dicing with the Future

In this section, I show you a few excellent prediction tricks using gimmicked dice. Such dice are available in most magic shops and you can even have them custom made.

Playing Russian roulette (safely)

Russian roulette is a very dangerous game of chance where participants place a single round in a revolver, spin the cylinder, place the muzzle against their clearly empty head and pull the trigger. The backstory seems to come from the Russian occupation of Romania in 1917, which can be included as engaging patter for this effect that's based on the concept.

The Effect: You place six clearly numbered plastic drinking cups on a table from left to right in front of the audience. You also put an envelope on the table. You ask a person to assist you on stage and tell him that a prize is under one of the cups. The dice are rolled and the helper smashes one cup at a time with their hand, until only one is left. When that cup is lifted, it has an egg underneath. He's told that he can keep the egg or the envelope. He rightly picks the envelope, which has a prediction inside that he'd pick the envelope.

The Secret: To eliminate the cup with the egg under it, you need to use a set of no chance dice that omit one number (as I describe in the earlier section 'Cheating with gimmicked dice'). As long as you manage the performance, nobody is ever really at risk, though it appears that they are.

What You Need: Obviously, you need to acquire a set of no chance dice. I had some custom made by a game company in the US, purportedly the same place

Penn and Teller have theirs made. A number of magic shops still carry them, so just ask around. You also need an egg. To number the cups, use an extra-large black marker. You also need five business cards with the word 'nothing' written on the backs, an envelope for the prediction and two lottery tickets.

The Setup: Number the cups on opposite sides with a large 1, 2, 3 and so on.



You need at all times to know which cup has the egg under it and obviously ensure that you never roll that number with the dice. Examine your dice before you ever use them to be sure that the number is missing. You can't allow any chance of ever rolling the number cup with the egg under it.



I keep the cups stacked randomly with the egg cup on the bottom so I know exactly where it is at all times: it's always the last cup I put down, I double check that the number matches and then I align the cups in order.

Print a letter that says, 'I knew you'd pick the envelope. Because you seem to have good luck, here are two lottery tickets as a parting gift. PS: If you win the lottery, you have to split the money with me!' and put it in the envelope along with the two lottery tickets. When the time comes to perform, set up the cups in advance on a table with cup number 1 starting on your right and cup number 6 ending on your left. From that point on, never take your eyes off them or let anyone near them to assure everyone's safety.

The Performance: After double checking that the egg is under the numbered cup that corresponds with the number that doesn't exist on your no chance dice, invite someone up on stage:

1. Have him stand behind the table with you to your right.

Explain that under one of the six cups is a prize, and that the two of you are going to play a game of chance. Whatever cup is left standing he can have what's under it or in the envelope; his choice.

2. Give him the dice.

Say, 'You're going to roll three sets of dice to eliminate one cup at a time, until there's only one left on the table'. Have him roll the dice and you smash the first cup to demonstrate what he's going to do each consecutive roll. Toss the smashed cup aside and read the card underneath that says 'Nothing' on it.

3. Have him roll again.

Eliminate another cup based on his dice roll and have him smash the cup and discard it as before.

4. Continue until one cup is left.

He's not to smash it. At this point, have the person step back and say, 'Given that you've had five 'Nothing' cards so far. I want you to think

about this and choose: do you keep what's under the cup or do you keep the envelope?"

- If he chooses the cup, walk over and lift it up to reveal the egg and say, 'I'll give you a second chance, would you like to keep what's under the cup or the envelope?' You can bet he now takes the envelope.
- If he chooses the envelope first time say, 'Okay, don't touch the cup. It's no longer yours. Just leave it on the table.' Have him stand back, retrieve the envelope and ask him to read it out loud. Then walk over to the table and finish with 'This is why I think you're a lucky person!'.

Predicting a random card

The Effect: You take out a deck of cards and place them face down on the table. You write something on a napkin without anyone seeing what you write and turn the napkin face down. You then reach into your pocket and pull out a set of dice and hand them to the person helping you out. You ask him to roll the two dice and add together the two numbers they land on. Next, you tell him to flip over each die to its opposite side, to add those two numbers and, finally, to add that total to the first total. When he has an overall total, you tell him to count that number down from the top of the deck and turn over whatever card he lands on. You turn over the napkin and your prediction is correct.

The Secret: This effect is purely mathematical in nature. The opposite sides of every set of dice add up to seven. If you use one die, you predict the card seventh from the top; if you use two dice, it's the fourteenth. And so on. Make sure that you know which cards are in seventh and fourteenth positions in your deck and everything runs smoothly.

Using psychic dice

Building on the trick in the preceding section, this one is really simple to perform but difficult to understand, unless of course you understand the maths. You need a glass and three dice.

The Effect: You drop three standard dice into an empty glass. After shaking them up, you ask a volunteer to add the total showing on the dice as viewed through the bottom of the glass. When you reveal your prediction, it matches.

The Secret: While you divert your helper's attention to the bottom of the glass, you add up the top of the dice and subtract that total from 21. Then

you secretly write the total on a business card with a Swami Gimmick (check out Chapter 6 for details on covert writing).

Follow these steps:

1. **Grab a clean, empty glass, then pull out three dice and put them on the table in front of you.**

Say to some friends, 'Hey, I'd like to try something with you, if you don't mind.'

2. **Drop the dice in the glass, then pick up the glass with your hand cupped over the top and shake it a few times.**

Look under the glass and, out loud, add up the numbers on the dice.

3. **Now say, 'In a moment, I'm going to get one of you to do what I just did. I want you to mix the dice, look at the bottom and add the numbers, but don't let me or anyone else see them. Just shake the glass, look at the numbers, add them up and put the glass back down.'**

Hand the glass to someone and get him to follow your instructions. Say, 'Before you say anything, I'm going to write down a prediction.' You don't actually write down the prediction – you just fake it. With the business card in your hand, catch a glimpse of the top numbers and add them up. Subtract this total from 21 and secretly write down the number on the back of the card with your Swami Gimmick.

4. **Put the card face down on the table and ask the person to say his total out loud.**

When he does, turn over your card.

Studying Associated Arts

You can improve and develop as a mentalist by studying allied prediction 'arts'. Shamans, witch doctors, psychics and mediums have used tools as diverse as astrology and runes for thousands of years in an effort to predict the future. Scores of different divination methods exist, and, although they're not tricks as such, these topics are worthy of your time. They can help you develop convincing patter, provide contexts for your routines and better connect with your audience. I describe just a handful in the following list:

- ✓ **Astrology:** Since the beginning of time, humans have gazed on the heavens in search of the answers to life's biggest questions. People who practise astrology believe in a discernable relationship between visible astronomical phenomena and events on earth. In modern western cultures, millions of people make decisions every day based on what the 'stars tell them'. When you read your horoscope in a newspaper, you're engaging in astrology.

- ✓ **Biblical divination:** The Bible is a rich source of examples of divination and prophesy, which are sometimes culturally accepted and practised and sometimes forbidden.
- ✓ **Bibliomancy:** This field is the study of ancient sacred books, especially words and verses used for the purposes of divination. A book is allowed to fall open and a passage chosen without looking. Small groups of Christians, Muslims, Jews and others practise this form of divination.
- ✓ **Cartomancy:** This form of divination includes the use of decks of cards, such as tarot and standard playing cards, to predict the future.
- ✓ **The Cube:** The Cube is believed to have been developed by Sufi Muslims in Greece or Turkey. Basically, you use five symbols, such as a cube, a ladder, flowers, a horse and a storm, to ask simple questions. You then interpret those symbols and their meanings.
- ✓ **Numerology:** Modern numerology is an eclectic mix of ancient cultures, which supports the belief that a connection exists between numbers and things, such as longevity. Perceived to be a 'universal language' that people can tap into to read their future, each number also has a value attached to it relating to life, love, health, wealth, and even the forces of good and evil.
- ✓ **Oneiromancy:** People have long been fascinated by their dreams, and so unsurprisingly an entire field is dedicated to dream interpretation to predict future events.
- ✓ **Palmistry:** Many people sincerely believe that their future is already mapped out for them and that fate can be read in the palm of their hands.
- ✓ **Phrenology:** Some people believe that the size and shape of the skull, and even the bumps on it, can be read to determine a person's fate.
- ✓ **Rune casting:** Often made of little wooden blocks or stones carved with the letters or shapes of an ancient Germanic alphabet, runes are cast (tossed out) and their fall interpreted.

Chapter 12

Look Into My Eyes: Getting the Hang of Hypnotism

In This Chapter

- ▼ Uncovering the art of hypnotism
- ▼ Employing the art of suggestion
- ▼ Using a basic routine
- ▼ Acting like a hypnosis pro

You're a chicken. When I snap my fingers, you'll begin to scratch around the stage, cluck and lay an egg.'

Just imagine if you had the ability to get anyone to do anything, however ridiculous or embarrassing. In this chapter, I describe how the concept of hypnosis works and ask whether people really can be talked into doing anything, anywhere, at anytime.

From the mentalist's perspective, whether hypnosis is real or fake – the result of tapping into a receptive unconscious mind or of willing an active subject into participation – is irrelevant. The important point is that you can use hypnotism to entertain people, as evidenced by over 100 years of successful shows involving the techniques that I share with you in this chapter. From instant inductions to deep trances and a basic routine, I show you how to play the part of a hypnotist and use hypnotism techniques to gain control over people for the purposes of entertainment. I also provide essential tips on remaining professional at all times.

Telling the Truth about Hypnotism

If I mention that I'm a hypnotist, I instantly become the centre of attention in a conversation. Merely mentioning the term gets people excited. That's because people have a great deal of energy and belief invested in hypnotism

and because the media, films and television portray it as something deeply powerful and mystical. The protagonist in the 1894 novel *Trilby*, which has subsequently been made into many film versions, really set the stage for the modern 'Svengali' character who can hypnotise women to do as he commands. Ironically, far too many mentalists use that character to model their own characters on!

The Woman in Green (1945), a Sherlock Holmes adaptation, depicts a female hypnotist who convinces men they're committing murders in London. *The Manchurian Candidate* is another example of 'mind control' to make people do as others command. All of it, of course, is hokum and not how hypnotism works at all.



Hypnotism, however, probably isn't what you think it is (check out the later section 'Grasping what hypnotism isn't'), and so in this section, I clear up some myths about the subject. When you understand what hypnotism really is and how it works, you quickly begin to see how easily you can play the role of a hypnotist and get people to fall under your spell.

Hypnotism defined

Since the Scottish surgeon James Braid coined hypnotism in 1842 as an abbreviation for 'neuro-hypnotism', academics, psychologists, average practitioners and even doctors who claim to be able to use hypnotism to cure everything from cancer to arthritis have published a virtual cornucopia of definitions. In other words, although hypnotism includes aspects of science, the subject isn't fully understood and much of what you read and hear about, even from experts, is unproven in science.

The Vaudevillian performer, NBC radio host and accidental war hero Dave Elman said that 'Hypnosis is a state of mind in which the critical faculty of the human is bypassed, and selective thinking established.' Though he had no medical training whatsoever, he's generally credited with training more physicians to perform hypnotism in America than any other practitioner during the early to mid-1900s.

Dr Milton Erickson, one of the most influential men in the field outside of Braid and Elman, said that hypnotism 'is a state of special awareness characterised by receptiveness to ideas'. He also described it as a trance. Among his best-known innovations is the handshake induction, which I show you how to do later in this chapter in 'Welcoming someone with the handshake induction'. That said, some of Erickson's methods and outcomes are highly contentious as they remain unproven as being anything more than well-crafted theatrics.

Other people call hypnotism an altered state of ego functioning, a state of selective hyper-suggestibility or a state of relatively heightened susceptibility to suggestions. It has also been said that hypnotism is misdirected attention, belief, expectation and imagination. Sceptics tend to see it as imaginative role-enactment at best and hooey at worst.

Grasping what hypnotism isn't

You may have come across some misconceptions about hypnotism. Below are some common thoughts about hypnotism – and the truth about those thoughts:

✓ **Myth:** It's all about control.

Truth: You don't lose self-control when you're 'under the spell' of hypnotism.

✓ **Myth:** It's about being weak-minded or gullible.

Truth: Really, it's a state of willing suggestibility.

✓ **Myth:** It's a state of unconsciousness or sleep.

Truth: If people are knocked out, they can't possibly respond to your requests or commands.

✓ **Myth:** It's a mystical or supernatural power possessed by someone and held over another.

Truth: It's a partnership of trust between the hypnotist and the subject.



Without the subject's willingness to participate, hypnotism – in any form – cannot exist.

Investigating what makes hypnotism work

In a 'properly hypnotised state', the subject is said to experience what can be described as an emotional desire to follow suggestions. Psychologically, this 'desire' is a complex social phenomenon that requires far more pages to explain than I have in this book, but the following sections provide three explanations of why people can appear to be in a hypnotised state.

The sheep effect

Any given group of people contains a certain number with strong personalities. People with less strong personalities often follow the lead of those whose actions and behaviours are more dominant. Hypnotism is believable because people follow the leader and copy what they do. Hypnotism is very much like leadership in that it's all about more dominant personalities influencing others. When one or more people fall into place and do as they're 'commanded' by a hypnotist, it appears that the hypnotist has control over the subject. In truth, though, the subject gives up control willingly. When others see that submission, they're quick to do the same thing.



The exhibitionist

Some people want to stand out, but they may not have the chance to do so in their normal daily lives. They may see a hypnosis performance as their chance to shine and be the star of the show. When you offer to hypnotise them, you create the opportunity for them to be the centre of attention, and so they go along with whatever you want them to do.

The belief factor

Those who believe in hypnotism and are convinced that it's real are easy to hypnotise, because you putting them into a trance is entirely in line with what they already 'know' is true. It's congruent with their belief. In the same way, people who believe in ghosts are quick to accept a noise outside as being a spirit, or someone who believes in aliens is quick to assume an aircraft she isn't familiar with must be an alien space craft. When you believe something, you look for evidence to support that belief, and you tend to act in ways that support it.

Examining who can be hypnotised

Anyone who wants to be hypnotised can be hypnotised – or at least they can outwardly appear to be.



But because not everyone is willing to be hypnotised, you need to bear in mind that not everyone *can* be hypnotised. Nobody can be put into a trance and made to do anything that they're not willing to do. This occurrence just isn't possible!

As a result, you need to ensure that you choose the best subjects for your own hypnosis performances carefully, which I discuss in the 'Selecting your subjects' section later in this chapter.

Understanding the Power of Suggestion

You've no doubt heard the saying that talk is cheap; well, in hypnotism, talk is everything. Hippolyte Bernheim, the father of twentieth-century hypnotism, famously said that, 'it is suggestion that rules hypnotism'. He was right; hypnosis is all about introducing ideas and thoughts that a person accepts and then uncritically acts on. In other words, a suggestion is psychological in nature but produces a physiological result. By suggesting that someone relax and take deep breaths, for example, her body responds to the thoughts she has in relation to your suggestions. Suggestions in themselves don't produce a hypnotic state without the involvement of the subject's imagination and emotion.

In this section, I talk you through some basic concepts of the human mind, how the brain processes information and how these facts affect what people perceive as reality. In fact, mentalism as a whole is very much about how the brain works. The brain is fascinating, and the more you understand about it, the better a performer you become.

Looking into the mind

Take a moment and try to consider how people think. The following list gives you a few interesting points to start with:

- ✓ **What you focus on, you become.** All thoughts create a physical reaction. If you think about stressful stuff all day long, you'll be a stressed-out person. Focus on things that are good and positive and your outlook on life mirrors those things.

This idea strongly suggests that your brain responds to the things you think about and brings your life in line with those thoughts, perceptions and beliefs. In mentalism, this point is important to understand. People who hold beliefs that fit with the theme of your performance are excellent to involve in routines because they help make your act a success.

- ✓ **What you expect to happen, often happens.** Generally speaking, what you expect manifests in your life. Call it a self-fulfilling prophecy if you like, but whatever you believe happens as an outcome more often than not. Therefore, if you believe in hypnotism or you 'see' it happen in front of you, you're likely to expect it to happen to you, too. When you demonstrate hypnotism, those watching the process may be far more likely to accept it as factual.

- ✓ **What you think is reality, is your reality.** Your mind doesn't know the difference between what's real and what isn't real. If you think it and you believe it, your brain assumes it's true. Of course, objective truth does exist – such as things that can be clearly proven to be true like the distance of the moon to the earth or if you boil water it converts from a liquid to a steam, but in many ways the brain is just a meat computer that processes information. It's an instrument; an organ. The mind is your ability to think – a process that takes place within the brain. For this reason, the uncritical subconscious mind can assimilate what it's given and act on that information as being true, even if it isn't true. Magicians have used this concept for thousands of years to create illusions that defy what humans accept as fact.

- ✓ **What you believe, you'll always believe.** When your mind accepts an idea as a fact, it always looks for evidence to back up that fact. In other words, it dismisses contrary facts and locks on to that 'truth' until it's replaced with something else. Whatever that belief happens to be, it remains in your subconscious and governs all behaviour related



to it. The longer it remains with no opposition, the stronger the idea becomes.

As an example, think of how a well-travelled road gets that way. It starts out as a rabbit trail – literally – which deer then widen. Soon, humans begin walking it because they see the pattern and doing so is easier than breaking through the woods. Then, they start riding horses on the trail, eventually widening it so they can pull wagons along it. In time, that little trail where a cottontail once hopped grows into a full-blown motorway.

- ✓ **What you do, you keep doing.** This rule is easy to understand and critically important when performing hypnotism. Every time people respond to and act on a suggestion – every time they say yes, for example – getting them to act on another suggestion and say yes again is much easier. The less opposition you experience at the beginning, the less you encounter overall.

Think of this process like putting tape on a hairy arm. Rip it off once, and the hair rips out causing pain. Do it again in five minutes, and no hair remains to rip out. Keep ripping, and it never hurts again. Likewise, as a mentalist you can move from one accepted suggestion to another, as often as you like. In the military, that's how those in command effectively indoctrinate soldiers to follow orders. After basic training, they do as they're told.

Suggesting some types of suggestion

Hypnotism is based on communication and suggestion, which means that to practise it successfully you need to understand the many different types of suggestion covered in this section.

Direct suggestions

Direct verbal or non-verbal communications request the subject to do something; examples include 'look at me', 'spread your feet wide apart' or 'sit down'. A non-verbal suggestion is pointing at a chair instead of saying 'sit down', but the person you're communicating with understands what you're saying. Another example is putting your hand up flat in front of someone. Most cultures understand that piece of non-verbal communication, which means to stop.

Indirect suggestions

Indirect suggestions are commands dressed up with niceness, which you can use to tell someone to do something without being forceful or blunt. They include statements, such as 'Would you like to sit down?' as you pull a chair out and place it behind the subject. Indirect suggestions are nearly always presented as a question.

Inferred suggestions

Like indirect suggestions (see the preceding section), *inferred suggestions* use commands but without the need for the spoken word. If you look at the subject and then at a chair, and point your palm-up hand toward the chair, the subject knows that you're asking her to sit down. While this action does fall into the category of direct suggestion, it's also inferred because the subject makes assumptions regarding what you're communicating based on her experience of growing up in a similar culture.

Prestige suggestions

Statements that help establish the subject's trust in the hypnotist are called *prestige suggestions*. My business card says 'James L. Clark, MBA, MSc' for a reason. Titles such as 'Doctor', 'Professor', 'Guru', 'Master' or 'Expert' are designed to suggest authority and expertise. You're more likely to accept direction and advice from people you perceive as being qualified – even if they aren't. In hypnotism, the mere mention that you are a 'certified' hypnotist is often sufficient to start a conversation that invariably leads to someone wanting you to hypnotise them. It's amazing how quickly people's cultural programming kicks in.



Hypnotism is about what a subject thinks is real, rather than what's actually real.

Quasi-authority suggestions

Quasi-authority suggestions involve people saying 'So and so said bla bla bla', and people taking those suggestions at face value. Whether the statement is true doesn't matter. The reality is that people commonly accept this kind of anecdotal 'evidence' because they tend to believe what people they trust tell them. It can be that a trusted friend said it or a friend said that an authority said it – either way, the result is the same. Those who trust it need only trust the person conveying the suggestion.

Environmental suggestions

Environmental suggestions include anything you sense that impacts the space you're in, such as a chill in the night, the sound of music or the smell of incense in the air. A good example of environmental suggestion is the frequent use of the colour 'green' in hospital rooms because it's been found to 'relax' patients. These suggestions can be real or imagined, but they play a role in how people respond to situations such as hypnotism, or even a séances in which they're hoping to have contact with the dead. Sometimes my assistant sprays rose water from the balcony during a particular part of my act because the aroma directly corresponds with my presentation. After such a performance, I've heard people in the lobby saying they know I'm a genuine psychic because they 'smelt' the rose water as if it were real.

Cultural suggestions

Cultural suggestions are based on the incredibly powerful cultural norms that rule much of human life. People don't always realise that they ascribe to a particular belief system because they've been brought up to. Society is controlled by such expectation. For example, unabashedly burp with gusto at my dinner table and I'll probably thump you. To put it another way, it's not acceptable to me culturally because of the latent Victorian ideals that I was raised with. In other cultures, though, it's rude not to burp after a meal. Understanding cultural norms helps you apply them to your act. If one comes from a highly religious culture, such as in Haiti where voodoo underpins every aspect of society, it's easy to convince someone you have special powers by performing simple sleight of hand. Cultures that are highly religious or steeped in mystical traditions are more likely to accept mystical things, such as hypnotism, than cultures that are highly analytical and sceptical.

Pavlovian suggestions

Pavlovian suggestions cause the subject to react with predictable behaviour when they're extensively repeated; in other words, they invoke a programmed response to an external stimulus. The term comes from an experiment conducted by Dr Ivan Pavlov. He rang a bell to indicate to his dogs that it was feeding time. He repeated the process until the dogs were programmed to associate the ringing of the bell with being fed and they salivated when they heard it. Eventually, the mere sound of the bell caused the dogs to salivate, even when they couldn't see or smell food. Astounding, really. Take another example – the elephant that doesn't break away from a string and a tiny peg in the ground because it remembers having a heavy chain tied to its foot when young and being unable to get away. Through repeatedly tugging at the very heavy chain, the elephant learns early on that it can't escape. It eventually gives up because it 'learns' through experience that it can't break the chain. Because of this, a grown elephant can be tied to a simple rope and stake and it will stay put.



Humans are like this too; after they're programmed to believe something, it's very difficult for them to decide against that belief. When performing hypnotism, this Pavlovian response is helpful to mentalists because many people have been programmed by popular culture to believe that certain things are real and so they align their behaviour to match what they believe.

Connective suggestions

A *connective suggestion* is one that produces an associated response. For example, when you're driving down the road and a song comes on the radio, that tune instantly transports you back to an associated memory. For me, the smell of a certain pipe tobacco transports me back to a ferry ride in the Outer Hebrides. You can also inject connective suggestions, such as tapping a person on the shoulder the moment a bell rings in the background and using suggestive language designed to help her relax.

Unconscious suggestions

Unconscious suggestions are almost implanted into a subject's mind. The brain assimilates suggestions consciously, with you realising it, and unconsciously, without you realising it. Because the subconscious mind never sleeps and is always active even when a person's in the deepest trance state (for more technical info on the various states, check out the later sidebar 'The science behind inducing Alpha'), it can be influenced at an unconscious level. For this reason, medics usually say encouraging words to patients who're unconscious or in a coma. They still 'hear' things even when they appear to be lifeless. From the perspective of a hypnotist or mentalist, unconscious suggestions allow you the opportunity to subtly influence without the conscious mind picking it up.

Pre-hypnotic suggestions

Pre-hypnotic suggestions are used before a subject enters a hypnotic state. They may include statements such as, 'After this session you'll open your eyes and be fully alert and full of energy. You'll feel invigorated and ready to accomplish your goals!' They can also include something like, 'Once you book me to entertain your group, you'll begin to see ticket sales increase exponentially!' In many respects, these appear no different to any other suggestion, except they are strategically placed before any aspect of hypnotism takes place and lay the foundation for what is to come.

Post-hypnotic suggestions

Statements such as 'Fantastic. Well done you. Great job!' and 'You'll begin to see a positive change and feel better about things now' are examples of *post-hypnotic suggestions*. These statements are made after hypnosis and suggest to the subject that a certain result will occur because of what happened when they were hypnotised.

Sexual suggestions

Sights, sounds, ideas and gestures, when they imply something of a sexual nature, can all be used as *sexual suggestions*. Without wanting to come across as creepy, these suggestions always garner attention and interest. In hypnotherapy, sexual suggestions can be designed to counter a subject's thoughts related to sex, for example that it's dirty or shameful. Because sex isn't purely physical, it goes without saying that positive statements and suggestions about it can help people deal with hang-ups they may have related to the topic.

From an entertainment perspective, sexual suggestions can be used to propose that you, as the performer, are far more sexually attractive to a subject than you really are. You can influence a subject so that, for example, every time they hear the word 'red' they feel an uncontrollable desire to rub up against you. If your subject is willing to assimilate that suggestion during the show, it can increase the comedic factor of the entire presentation.

Self-suggestions

Self-suggestions are things that you tell yourself. I'm reminded of Al Franken's *Saturday Night Live* character 'Stuart Smiley', who stands in front of a mirror and says, 'You're good enough, you're smart enough and doggone it, people like you.' That's essentially what self-suggestions are – self-affirming statements designed to sway your views toward a given belief. But they can also be negative in nature. As the old saying goes, 'whatever you believe you can or can't do – you're right.' In hypnotism, you can direct someone to repeat statements as self-suggestions, which the mind is then quick to accept.

External suggestions

External suggestions are statements from other people that, like self suggestions (see the preceding section), can be positive or negative. Examples include people on the sidelines yelling 'You can do it!' while you're running a marathon, or that relative who tells you 'You'll never make it!' when you share a goal with them. You can give some positive external suggestions to participants in your show as a way to increase their enjoyment. Imparting positive suggestions to those who help you out is always nice. Even if they don't stick, they're certainly not harmful.

Following the five laws of suggestibility

When you understand the different types of suggestions that I describe in the preceding section and how they work to shape an audience's experience of hypnosis, you can use this knowledge to improve your own hypnosis performances.

But the way in which you use the power of suggestion is also integral to the authenticity of your performance. I've picked up five laws of suggestibility over the years. They've helped me create much more believable hypnosis presentations.

Law of reverse action

The *law of reverse action* establishes that subjects respond to the stronger part of a suggestion better than the weaker part. For example, if I say, 'Your eyes are getting sleepy. And even though you may want to open them, the harder you try the more locked shut they become', the stronger statement is that the eyes are getting sleepy, because it's affirmed by the implication of a lock. The weaker impulse to open is overshadowed and repressed.

Another example (commonly used in 'The rigid arm' test, which I describe later in this chapter) is where you raise the subject's arm and say, 'Stiffen your arm. Good. Stiffer. Stronger. It's like a steel rod. Even though you'll try to bend it, it's so stiff you won't be able to.' You are affirming the fact that the

arm is stiff in multiple ways, which reaffirms it. Essentially, you're commanding the subject to do the opposite of what she may want to do and to follow your suggestions instead.

Law of delayed action

The *law of delayed action* states that a strong post-hypnotic statement (which I define in the preceding section) creates an expectancy that comes to fruition at a later time. Doctors may use it to encourage a person to change her dietary habits after hypnotherapy. For entertainment purposes, examples include, 'Whenever you hear the word "pencil" you'll find the word so funny, so utterly hilarious, that you'll burst into instant, uncontrollable laughter' and 'When you hear me snap my fingers, you'll awake refreshed, fully alert and for the duration of this show will forget your name.' These post-hypnotic suggestions can be made to take place after hypnosis, in-between the next hypnotic state. This law is a fantastic tool during a performance for because you can get subjects to do or say things randomly by activating a given suggestion.

Law of repetition

The Latin phrase *repetitio est mater studiorum* means repetition is the key to learning; it's also the key to learned behaviour. The *law of repetition* is based on the reality that, when people are told something over and over again, they start to accept it as fact. This law works by conditioning the subject's mind to respond to a suggestion automatically.



During a performance, you can repeat a given suggestion (for example, 'When I snap my fingers and touch your head you instantly fall into a deep state of relaxation') at various times with the same people or a group and doing so reinforces the required behaviour.

Law of association

The *law of association* is one of the most interesting and states that, when people respond to one stimulus in the presence of another, they tend to associate the two. When I think of a big cigar and a bowler hat, I automatically see an image of Winston Churchill in my mind. You can effectively use sounds, scents, clothing and the like to make a link with other things, actions and commands.

Law of dominance

Also known as the 'law of authority', the *law of dominance* works because humans are programmed not to question authority figures. If someone approaches you, displays a badge and tells you to do something, your conditioned response is to do what you're told (even more so if the person uses a 'command voice' and body language that screams authority).

As a performer playing the part of a hypnotist, you have to act as though you're really that person. You need to take charge during your performance unequivocally, without hesitation or reservation. If you do, people respond to your suggestions accordingly.

When I perform, I am very clear and direct when I tell subjects to do something. But I use tones that are decidedly even-handed to avoid coming across as harsh. If you command someone to 'sleep', it's best to say the command quickly as if a sense of urgency exists. Think of it like this: if your dog comes into the kitchen to beg for food and you, in a sweet, almost playful voice command it to leave, it will sit there and wag its tail. The only way to get that dog out of the kitchen is to use command authority – then, it'll respond immediately.



If you waiver or are at all timid while performing, people see through you and may not do as you ask them.

Setting the scene for suggestibility: Inducing Alpha

Although the performance of hypnotism can be mechanical in nature, I'm a fierce advocate for creating meaningful, powerful and positive experiences in the minds of the people I'm performing for. One way to do so is to purposefully *induce Alpha*, which means creating an altered state (something that I define in the nearby sidebar 'The science behind inducing Alpha') in participants and audience members.

The science behind inducing Alpha

Brain waves are measured in cycles per second, and each measurement corresponds to a Beta, Alpha, Theta or Delta level. Beta is associated with external focus and occurs when brain waves oscillate between 14 to 30 cycles per second. As you relax and start to disconnect from the distractions of the surrounding world, you enter Alpha, which is measured at between 8 and 12 cycles per second. Alpha is associated with being more focused and experiencing an expanded sense of awareness internally. Theta (4 to 7 cycles per second) is

a truly relaxed state and represents that fleeting moment before you fall asleep and enter the Delta level at below 4 cycles per second.

Alpha, Theta and Delta states are defined as *altered states*, as opposed to Beta, which is seen as being fully conscious. Because people can't practically function at Theta and Delta levels, Alpha makes sense as the only logical state in which you can actually interact with people. In many routines that I perform, I go out of my way to bring people to the Alpha level before I perform a given trick.



Never, and I do mean never, try to use the rapid inductions that I explain in this book without a subject's permission. Even with my training, experience and skill in rapidly inducing almost anyone, anywhere, at any time – I'd never do so without permission. Doing so isn't only rude but also downright unprofessional. And although you can perform these inductions just about anywhere (I still love impromptu demonstrations of mentalism and hypnotism), they're best used in formal shows where people are expecting hypnotism. Please keep that in mind.

Follow these steps to induce your subject into the Alpha state:

- 1. Ask your volunteer to close her eyes.**
- 2. Encourage her to take a few, slow deep breaths.**
- 3. Ask her to visualise appealing imagery and colours, such as a gentle brook or ocean waves.**

This simple exercise works to bring your subject into a very relaxed but focused state – the perfect platform on which to begin your hypnosis performance. All that breathing and stuff you hear people do when meditating really isn't just for show!

Getting Your Performance Going

Setting the stage is an important aspect of performing as a hypnotist. You can create the right environment in a variety of ways, as I show you in this section.

Perfecting your pre-talk

Whether you're performing hypnotism routines in private or on the stage, the most effective way to ensure that your subjects are compliant is to talk to them in advance. Pre-talk is important because it's your opportunity to dispel myths, allay fears and encourage co-operation by properly and honestly explaining hypnotism and the process you're going to be using. This can be done by singling out participants in advance for a show or talking to them before they come up on stage. You can also get assistants to do the same for you. With a little effort, you can overcome any resistance before show time so you, your subjects and the audience can have a great time.

Here are two techniques to help you out:



- ✓ **Mirroring for rapport:** Anyone who studies interpersonal communication knows that, if you mirror people sitting across from you, they generally perceive you as being like them. And because most people like themselves, they also like you. Gestures, micro-expressions and other non-verbal communication really do go a long way in creating rapport before a show.

When you're reflecting your subject's body language, tone and speech patterns, start trying to modify her behaviour by modifying your own and watch if the person follows you. I discovered a long time ago that, within seconds of mirroring someone, I can take control of the situation and get the person to follow me. You can, too. Take a look at *Body Language For Dummies* by Elizabeth Khunke (Wiley) for more on non-verbal communication.

- ✓ **Eye scanning:** This method is often used in the art of seduction and may work better with the opposite sex. However, I use it to great effect as part of an overall effort to build rapport with an audience member. All you have to do is:

1. **Look into your subject's eyes and begin scanning her irises left to right.**
2. **Scan the left eye and the right eye separately, in turn.**
3. **Repeat this process several times.**



Don't stare or get all creepy! Just relax and soften your voice and expressions. This horizontal pattern evokes feelings of closeness and intimacy in the brain. When you've done it a few times, in a non-intrusive or challenging way, your subject begins to feel more comfortable with you.

Preparing your opening statement

Opening statements set up your act by preparing the audience. A great opening statement before you begin your performance is: 'If you're intelligent, sincere, have a good imagination and can focus, you'll be a good subject for hypnotism. We're here to have a good time!' The statement helps discourage people from resisting you on stage because nobody wants to be the bad guy. During your performance you want the subject to feel peer pressure. At the very core, hypnotism works because of the subject's willingness to participate, to suspend disbelief and to co-operate with you. A well-thought-out opening statement helps to ensure that this happens.

Selecting your subjects

Not everyone can be hypnotised, and you need to identify the people who can be. If you have 300 people in an audience, you may pull 20 up on stage

but keep only 15. The key is to choose people who're going to respond positively so that the act goes well. I always start out by getting the entire audience into an Alpha state (check out the earlier section 'Setting the scene for suggestibility: Inducing Alpha' for how to do this).



Don't include in any hypnotism routine people who've been drinking alcohol or ingesting mind-altering substances.

Here's how to begin your selection process:

1. Prepare the audience.

Say something along the lines of: 'Okay, let's get ready for the show. Sit up now, everyone take a deep breath and close your eyes. Yes, that's right. Keep them shut and just listen to my voice for a moment. Breathe deeply, in and out. That's good. Hear my voice and just focus on me. I want you to see in your mind an ocean. See waves gently breaking on the beach in your mind and hear the sounds of the ocean. It's calming. Perfect.'

2. Have a look at the people in the front few rows while you're speaking to see who does what you ask.

Take a mental note of the people who don't participate and be sure to avoid them when selecting subjects for your routine.

3. Instruct the audience members to open their eyes.

Say, 'I'm going to need some volunteers; if you want to help me out, raise your hand.'

Choose people who seem excited and avoid those who don't.



As you invite subjects up on to the stage, say, 'I won't be able to use everyone . . . some of you may need to go back to your seat.' When your selected subjects are on stage, the easiest way to test their suitability for your performance is to ask them to do something. For example, touch someone lightly and say 'Step over here' as you physically move her. If you feel resistance, you need to dismiss that person from the stage by simply saying, 'Thank you for your help; you can go ahead and return to your seat now.' You're looking for compliance.



People who are eager to help out with hypnotism are easy to spot. They display their desire in their body language. Occasionally, however, you get people who seem enthusiastic to volunteer but in fact are just looking to cause trouble. They often make a lot of jokes or wise cracks and display physical behaviour that's resistant to suggestion. They may try to up-stage you and challenge the things you say. If you can distinguish between these two types of people early on, you're on your way to choosing a great selection of volunteers, which helps maximise the success of your performance.

Vetting your volunteers: Introducing suggestibility tests

You can choose from a number of suggestibility tests to help identify how responsive your volunteers are going to be to your hypnosis routine. I outline these tests in this section.



Before beginning any of these tests, make sure that each volunteer is in the Alpha state (which I describe in the earlier section ‘Setting the scene for suggestibility: Inducing Alpha’). You need to address all of the volunteers and say something like, ‘Everyone can be hypnotised and I love working with enthusiastic people on stage, but I can only use a handful of you. I may have actually brought too many people up.’

The rising and falling arm

This classic suggestibility test is easy to do. By performing this test on your subjects, you’re not only assessing their level of compliance, but also ensuring that they can follow directions and replicate what they’re shown (the essential attributes of a subject in any hypnosis routine). Follow these steps:

1. Ask your subject to put her feet together.

Then ask her to hold both arms out in front of her. Say, ‘Just like this.’ Demonstrate by placing your arms out straight with your palms facing the ground.

2. Say, ‘Keep your left hand perfectly level, and make a loose fist with your right hand as if you’re hitchhiking.’

Continue with ‘Close your eyes and imagine a large bucket filled to the top with sand. It’s very heavy, and I’ve just hung it from your left hand. But your right hand has a weather balloon tied to it that’s pulling it off the ground toward the sky. In your mind, I want you to imagine and see these objects attached to both wrists. The bucket on your left arm is weighing it down toward the floor. Your left arm is getting tired and weak. It can hardly muster any strength at all. It’s falling faster and faster. The bucket is so heavy that it hurts. But the right arm is as light as a feather. There’s no weight at all. The balloon is pulling the arm higher and higher.’



Gently touch or stroke each arm as you’re talking about it, thus helping to build rapport and trust during the process.

3. Finish by saying, ‘Easily. Effortlessly. The right arm just lifts up and up and up. The left arm just falls down and down and down.’

If your volunteer’s arms aren’t following these instructions by this point, gently apply upward pressure to the right arm and downward pressure to the left. It doesn’t take long. A person is suggestible – or they’re not.

4. **Ask your volunteer to stop and open her eyes to see how far her arms have moved.**

Most people are surprised by what they see.

The rigid arm

This suggestibility test is a favourite of many hypnotists who use speed induction or techniques that rapidly induce hypnotic states in subjects. To perform this test, follow these steps:

1. **Instruct your subject to extend her arm (left or right) out in front with her palm facing down.**

Say, 'Holding your arm out in front of you, with your eyes closed, you can feel it hardening up like concrete. Like it's turning to stone. It's stiff and rigid and can't be bent even if you try to force it. In fact, it would take a great deal of force to move it at all. Good that's it. Great job. Perfect.'

2. **Test your subject's suggestibility by making brushing movements over her arm and gently pushing down to see whether she offers any resistance.**

If it starts to move, you know that she's not fully in a suggestive state and you may need to work with her more or dismiss her altogether. If it's stiff – perfect.

3. **Say, 'In just a second I'm going to try to bend your arm.'**

Continue, 'You don't have to resist it, your arm will do it for you; it's as stiff as a board and as strong as steel.' Then, start to push on her arm, or at least make it appear to the audience as though you're doing so. Say something along the lines of, 'Perfect. It's strong. It's rigid. I can't bend it.'

4. **Say, 'I want you now to see the power of your own mind.'**

Continue, 'In a moment you're going to try to bend your arm but the more you try, the less it will bend. That's because you're so focused and in thought. Focus now, try to bend it.'

If her arm starts to bend immediately, say, 'That's fantastic. Your arm is bending now, softer and softer, less rigid. Perfect. Relax.'

If her arm doesn't move, you can discontinue by gently touching her on the side of the neck and saying, 'In a moment I'm going to release your arm. When I tap you again on your neck you'll feel it become soft and pliable again.' Then tap her gently and help her relax the arm. This does two things: it creates the impression that you're controlling the situation, when in fact, you're simply pre-empting her resistance to present a favourable outcome to the audience. And it sets up the chance to dismiss her before you go any further.

Anyone who doesn't comply quickly and respond to your suggestions should be asked to leave. While working with them say, 'Thank you. You did brilliantly. You can go back to your chair now.'



Continue to give your subjects affirmation and praise throughout the process. Encouraging people means they're more likely to work with you and feel good about the show. Being positive always goes a long way to helping everyone enjoy the process.

Stuck eyes

Like other tests, this one checks your subjects' compliance while giving the audience the impression that you're in complete control of them.

Follow these steps:

- 1. Ask your subject to take a few good deep breaths and ask her to close her eyes.**

As her eyes begin to close, say, 'Your eyes are becoming heavy, as if you're so tired that you can't possibly keep them open. Heavier and heavier and heavier. They're feeling like massive steel doors slamming shut. Good. Perfect. I want you to just imagine them being glued shut. You can actually feel the pressure coming down from your forehead onto your eyes.'

- 2. Continue to address your subject.**

Say, 'With your eyes closed, I want you to look upward inside. As if you're trying to see your third eye buried deep within your brain.'

You get your subject to look upward with her eyes closed because opening her eyelids later on becomes harder.



- 3. Carry on speaking.**

Say, 'In a moment, I'll ask you to try to open your eyes but you won't be able to. The harder you try, the more it will feel like you're looking up at the sun. Your eyes won't be able to open. Try it now.'

Her eyes should start to flutter, which is a physical sign that your suggestions are working. After a few seconds say, 'Stop trying now. Just relax. Easy. Good. In a moment, when I snap my fingers, you'll be able to open your eyes. Refreshed. Feeling good. Excellent.' Snap your fingers and you're done. If she happens to open her eyes, which is exceedingly rare in my experience, immediately say, 'Open your eyes now!' The interesting thing is that very few people in the audience will have any idea that the subject actually didn't do as she was asked. You can also do a head pull down induction, which takes the focus away from the subject's eyes.

Magnetic fingers

This test is called a *magic body effect* – something that isn't what it appears to be. It works automatically (the subject's muscles do all the work), but theatrical hypnotists use it to create the illusion that hypnotism is taking place. Follow these steps:

1. **Ask your subject to place her hands out in front and then to clasp her hands together with the fingers interlocked and the thumbs crossing over one another.**
2. **Ask her to bend her arms so that her knuckles are now facing the sky.**
3. **Instruct her to bring out each index finger, still pointing at the sky, and to keep them separated as far apart as she can.**



She needs to squeeze the hands, but not the fingers. The heels of her palms should be pressed firmly against one another.



The idea is that your subject's fingers are like magnets, being pulled into one another. No matter how hard she tries, her fingers continue to attract one another until the force is so strong that they eventually touch. When the subject's fingers touch, she should close her eyes. You set this up by telling her, 'In a moment, your fingers will touch and, when they do, you'll close your eyes and relax.' Even though people think that this trick is about the mind, in fact the muscles are doing the work. It's nothing more than a physiological response that takes place as you clamp down the interlaced fingers and press the heels of your palms together.

You can also use the techniques that I talk about in this section to test a subject's potential compliance with your suggestions, within your hypnosis routine itself to demonstrate how deeply a participant is under your control. In this case, you turn each of these suggestibility tests into what appears to be a magical experience.

For example, during the rising and falling arm test you can brush your volunteer's arms upwards or downwards to add a visual, mystical feel to your performance. If you're making the person's eyes seal shut, you can brush your hand downwards in front of her face as you talk about the eyes being heavy. After all, you're giving a theatrical performance.

Go to the later section 'Mastering a Basic Hypnosis Routine' to find out how these suggestibility techniques can be used as part of a full hypnosis performance.

Putting Your Induction Skills into Practice

This book provides lots of theory about hypnosis, but if you never put it into practice, none of that theory matters.

Inducting in three minutes

This induction method is a classic developed by Dave Elman half a century ago. Although the method seems basic, it's incredibly effective. Many professional hypnotists swear by this technique and use it as their go-to induction.

Read through this routine's patter and take note of the key techniques of induction that I include in brackets:

1. **'Hi, how are you?'** (Greet her with a big smile and point at a chair for her to sit down on – indirect suggestion.) She sits down. 'Keep your eyes open, take a long, deep breath through your nose and hold it for three seconds. Good (affirmation). Perfect. Now, exhale.'
2. **'Okay, again. One more time, nice and deep in through your nose and out through your mouth.'** Excellent. Relax. Perfect. One more time; you can do it (external suggestion and affirmation). That's right. Good job.'
3. **'I'd like you to close your eyes (gentle direct suggestion).'** All the way (a stronger command). Yes, that's right (affirmation). Closing tightly all the way, they're becoming tighter and tighter. Shut like a steel safe as you fall deeper and deeper into a relaxed state. With every heartbeat and every breath, you relax more and more and more.'
4. **'From your head down now, I want you to just relax.'** Starting with your forehead, to the tiny muscles around your eyes, just relax. Let all the tension and anxiety go. You're becoming limp. More and more relaxed. That's fine. You're doing great. You're so relaxed now that you couldn't even open your eyes if you tried. In fact, as you try right now, you can't open them. The harder you try, the more you can't open them.'
5. **'Stop trying now.'** That's it. Just relax and feel a wave of calm and relaxation overcome you. From your head to your feet. You feel it as it washes over you, inch by inch, like you're being submerged in a warm bath.'
6. **'In a moment, I'm going to lift up your arm at the wrist.'** When I do, I want that arm to be completely relaxed and totally limp. It should be heavy and relaxed like a soft comforting blanket. I want you to feel the warmth now, like you're being wrapped up in a blanket just taken from

the dryer. It's so warm and inviting. You're just able to totally relax. Deeper and deeper, more and more relaxed. Perfect.'

7. **'When I drop your arm to your side, you'll allow yourself to sink a hundred times deeper into this relaxed state.** You'll feel a peace like never before (gently drop the subject's arm). Just enjoy it. Relish it. Take the time to be at peace. Safe. Protected. Excellent.'
8. **'I'm going to ask you to start counting backwards from 100 down to 97 in your head as I count out loud.** When I start counting, when you hear each number, say the words deeper still in your mind so each time you say it you feel more relaxed. By the time I reach 97, you'll be so calm and relaxed that those numbers will just naturally fade away and disappear. Expect it to happen and it will happen. Begin counting now (direct suggestion).' When the subject reaches 97, go to Step 9.
9. **'There they go, gone, lost, fading away.** Farther and farther away. Fading from your mind. Gently. Softly. Gone. Good. That's perfect. Just breathe.'

This induction takes about three minutes. If you perform it as scripted here, your subject should be very relaxed now and open to suggestion.

Performing an instant head-pull induction

This is my favourite induction. Follow these steps:

1. **Place both hands on your subject's shoulders.**
Say, 'Look at me. Step closer now. Good, spread your feet shoulder-width apart. Perfect.'
2. **Place your right hand on the back of her head with your forearm pressing against her shoulder area and slightly into the chest.**
3. **Gently rock her body backward and forward a little to test her balance and resistance.**
4. **If she's compliant so far, swiftly but not violently, pull her forehead down into the soft area of your shoulder while simultaneously saying 'Sleep!'**

If her head comes down immediately, say, 'Yes, good. Eyes closed. Going deeper and deeper and deeper. Relax. Breathing deeply, your legs supporting you firmly but your entire upper body relaxed.'

If for some reason she resists you, don't sweat it. It happens on occasion. Just say, 'It's okay, relax. Sleep. Let yourself go.' And continue to gently pull her down until she's touching your shoulder. Continue as before, encouraging her through direct suggestion.



Welcoming someone with the handshake induction

Milton Erickson was particularly lauded for his development of the handshake induction. I know a lot of performers who use this technique with great success, and, after reading this book, you can be one of them! After building some basic rapport with the subject by mirroring and having a basic positive conversation (see the section 'Understanding the Power of Suggestion' earlier in this chapter), continue as follows:

1. Grip your subject's hand in a static handshake.

Say, 'I'm going to shake your hand three times. The first time I shake your hand your eyes are instantly going to feel heavy and you'll feel drawn into a relaxed state. On the second shake, you won't be able to resist that state. And on the third shake, you'll fall into a state of complete relaxation, your feet firmly planted and your legs supporting you, but your upper body totally relaxed with your head down and your eyes closed. Do you understand?'

2. Prepare to induct.

Check that your subject understands what the routine is going to involve. Then get her to take a deep breath and begin shaking her hand, saying, 'Here we go, your eyes are feeling heavy. You're falling now. Sleep! Eyes closed, falling deeper and deeper, resting, relaxed. You're sleeping and standing, standing and sleeping. Perfect.'

Although it isn't actually necessary, I place my left hand behind the subject's neck and pull her in and I pull her hand in firmly at the same time. I've found that this approach ensures an induction takes place – or at least appears to have occurred as a result of physically controlling the subject's head.



Terminating the trance

Of course, if you place someone under hypnosis then you need to be able to bring her out, too! *Terminating a trance* simply means to bring the session to an end. Doing so is very easy and all you have to do is follow these steps:

1. Prepare for terminating the trance.

Say, 'In a moment you'll awake from this relaxed state, refreshed, truly rejuvenated and invigorated. You'll feel great. Better than before.'



I always use some kind of post-hypnotic suggestion (which I discuss in the earlier section ‘Suggesting some types of suggestion’) before I bring a subject fully back round. Say something like, ‘In the future all I have to do is gently touch the back of your head and say the word “sleep” and you’ll gently crumble into my shoulder, head down, in a state of total relaxation just like you are now, but standing firmly on your own legs. Nod your head if you understand.’

2. Bring your subject out of the trance.

Say, ‘Calmly now. Gently allow your mind and body to return to a full state of consciousness. Almost like you’re turning on soft lighting. Each muscle, each nerve, awaking with each heartbeat and breath. As I count from one to five, you’ll open your eyes and be fully aware and back in the room with me. One, two, three and eyes opening, four, five – wide awake and fully here.’

Mastering a Basic Hypnosis Routine

Jerome Finley, truly one of the most talented and gifted performers I’ve ever had the privilege to know, says:

Hypnotists are prone to the same delusions that most magicians and mentalists suffer from. It’s easy to forget how extremely effective the basics of our craft are. It’s common to search for ‘the next best thing’ while forgetting or rejecting those early techniques we used and drew upon during our formative stages.

The basic hypnotism routine in this section is based on one that Jerome shared with me a while ago, and it fully embodies his ethos. The scripting is my own but very similar to what he recommends for new hypnotists. The trick involves inductions that I outline earlier in this chapter (in ‘Putting Your Induction Skills into Practice’). Ensure that you’re familiar with them and then success is all down to your delivery.

Addressing your audience

This routine is really effective and looks great. To make it ‘totally killer’, though, launch into your hypnotism routine directly after you’ve performed a short set of hard-hitting mentalism tricks. Follow these steps:

1. Kick things off by addressing your audience directly.

Say something like, 'Has anybody here been hypnotised before?' I like to ask this question because it grabs the audience's attention and sets the stage for what's to come. If anyone indicates that she has, choose that person to work with.



'Putting someone under' is far easier if she has experienced hypnosis before. The fact that you've also just demonstrated several other forms of mind-blowing mentalism (taken from this book!) means that you can pretty much assume that everyone's going to get excited about hypnotism being next on the agenda. If nobody has been hypnotised before, simply ask whether anyone wants to be. Almost always, someone's willing.

2. Take your willing subject by the hand and gently lead her away from any tables or other obstacles into a clearing where everyone can see you both.

Say, 'You have nothing to worry about; I won't get you to do anything embarrassing. This is totally safe and a really fun way to demonstrate the power and strength of your own mind.'



You can involve up to six participants in this routine. The more people you work with, the more they tend to play off of each other and things become creative and frenzied. Usually, friends try to up-stage each other, which helps you put on a better show. If you decide to include more than one subject, select the additional volunteers in the same way as directed in these steps. Line up all your subjects from left to right so that your audience can see them.

Taking immediate control of your subjects is important to establish that you're in charge. Make sure you physically adjust them, move them and so on so that they're indoctrinated into accepting commands and suggestions.

Going for the gasps: Group hypnosis

Inducing sleep in all of my subjects simultaneously is one of my favourite tricks to perform with a small group. Doing so is very simple but has maximum impact. It's especially easy – and also safer! – if they're in chairs. Believe it or not, this trick can be as easy as trotting down the line of people sitting in their chairs, touching them on the head and saying, 'Sleep!'

Simply say, 'In a moment all of you are going to enter a perfect state of relaxation as I pass by and brush my hand gently on your head. Your

head will fall, your eyes will close and your upper body will relax and slump.' When you're ready, pass everyone and command 'Sleep!' as you touch them on the side of their heads. Always click your fingers right at the moment you give the sleep command. When everyone falls asleep, the audience usually gasps.

Then say, 'In a moment, when I count to three, you'll wake up. One, two, three – awake! Perfect. Great job.'



Ensure that you take a very relaxed and safe approach to how you address your volunteers. In some cases, you may have to take a more paternal or authoritative approach. The more you perform hypnotism, the more you discover how to gauge what's best for the moment and best for your subjects.

Putting your participants 'under'

As with all hypnosis performances, be sure to spend some time inducing your volunteers into an Alpha state (flip to the 'Setting the scene for suggestibility: Inducing Alpha' section earlier in this chapter for more details).

When your volunteers are ready, here's how to amaze and astound your audience:

- 1. Deliver your standard patter and begin build rapport with your subject, ensuring that your subject is happy with what you're about to do and ready to start.**

Say something like, 'I'm going to help you enter a more relaxed state. It will feel completely normal and totally safe. You'll be completely aware during the process and happy to participate.'

- 2. Continue addressing your participant.**

'From now on, during this performance, whenever I say the word "sleep" to you, you'll immediately fall into a deep state of relaxation. Your eyes will close. You'll be totally safe. Your feet firmly planted and supporting you, but your head down and upper body relaxed. When I say "sleep", you'll do as you're asked with full confidence, entering this peaceful state, fully focused on my voice. Every time you hear this word, you'll feel ten times more relaxed still. If you understand, nod your head.'



Tap your subject(s) on the shoulder each time you give a command or suggestion to help anchor what you're saying. Doing so also suggests to the audience that 'something' is happening, even if they don't understand what that may be.

- 3. Bring your subject out of this relaxed state.**

Say, 'On my count of three you'll open your eyes. One, two (snap), three. Wide awake. Good, how are you feeling? Perfect.'

- 4. Ask your participant to open her eyes when you're ready and feel confident that she's fully prepared for your hypnosis routine.**

You should be able to proceed with her when you can see that she's following your directions without fail. You can now perform any of the inductions described in the earlier section 'Putting Your Induction Skills into Practice' to maximum effect.



I recommend trying the head-pull induction first. I *always* manage to put subjects 'under' using this technique. When your subject is 'under', carry out any of the suggestibility techniques outlined in the earlier 'Vetting your volunteers: Introducing suggestibility tests' section, to prove to your audience that your volunteer is under your full control. I suggest the rigid arm test as a good starting point because it's easy to perform and easy for your volunteer to do on command.

If you're working with a group of participants, here's a great way to perform your hypnosis routine:

1. **Pick one of your volunteers at random, walk up to her and introduce yourself while holding on to her hand for a moment as you talk.**
2. **Drop the participant's hand, put your hands on her shoulders, adjust her to make sure that you have compliance, and go straight into one of the inductions that I detail earlier in the 'Putting Your Induction Skills into Practice' section.**



When moving on to the induction part of the routine, try not to hesitate for too long or spend too much time on it. The faster you can do it, the more impressive the impact on your audience is and the more real it appears to everyone.

Trust me when I tell you that this routine is as simple and easy as it looks. The audience members are impressed, even though they knew what to expect. The reactions you get and the beliefs you instil about 'your abilities' are sure to amaze you. Everyone watching believes that you're a genius hypnotist.



I realise that you may be reading this and thinking that you can't do hypnotism, or asking yourself what happens if it doesn't work. The fact is, it will work. I know that can seem hard to understand, but I'm telling you the truth. The only thing you have to do now is go out and try some hypnotism for real.

Being the Real Deal

To be a professional hypnotist you have to act like one. Of course, you're not really a hypnotist, any more than you're a mind reader or can predict the future. It's all a performance. But if you want to be seen and accepted as a professional, you need to act like one. Everything you do and say, including how you dress and how you market yourself, needs to be consistent with the fact that you're a mentalist and a professional hypnotist.

In this section, I describe the most important things to remember in order to be a top-notch hypnotist. Heck, these tips also apply to being a mentalist in general. They're not optional – they're mandatory. So take this advice seriously!

Talking the talk

Sounding like a hypnotist is really just about mimicking other hypnotists you observe on TV or online. Practising your patter and making sure you can pull it off is crucial to convincing others that you're the real thing. Saying things like, 'In a moment you're going to close your eyes on my command and feel at ease, rested and safe. Your legs will hold you perfectly in place but your head will fall, your eyes will close and you'll drop into a deep relaxed state' sounds like something a 'hypnotist' would say. Delivering your lines without hesitation and with authority will convince others of your legitimacy.

Conjuring up confidence

If you want to be good at hypnotising people, you need complete confidence in yourself, your skills and your ability to hypnotise. You have to exude total authority. In many respects, you have to fake it until you make it.



Being nervous and 'feeling' like your act isn't going to work is something everyone goes through when starting out. Even if you're not confident, though, never show it. The good news is that, when you try it, you quickly realise just how ridiculously easy hypnosis is.

Dressing for impressing

Apparently, clothes maketh the man. That's not entirely true, but it's true enough. People judge you on what you're wearing – make no mistake about it. If you dress unprofessionally, people may not take you as seriously. Presenting yourself in clean, professional and beautifully ironed clothing can go a long way to convincing others that you are who you claim to be.

Assessing your audience

Only perform when the situation is right. If you tell someone that you're a hypnotist and she perks up excitedly and says, 'Oh, really? That's amazing!' you have an opportunity to work because the situation allows for it. If she rolls her eyes and grunts, move on. It generally doesn't apply to audiences because most of the time they're expecting you and are receptive to what you have to offer.

Refusing to be a performance monkey

When people ask me for a private demonstration, generally I make them wait or set up an appointment. After all, I'm nobody's performance monkey and you shouldn't be either. You decide where and when you share your mentalist and hypnosis 'gifts' with people. Think of it like this: when you meet someone who plays the guitar, you don't immediately beg the person to fetch her Gibson and sing you a song. Your new skills are valuable and unique, so protect them and your time. By not being instantly available anytime someone asks, you create boundaries and demonstrate that your skills are yours alone. Don't be rude, but don't feel obligated to perform at the drop of a hat. Your talent is precious – so treat it that way. Making yourself elusive also only adds to your appeal and air of mystery.

Chapter 13

Chilling Out with Cold Reading

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding out about cold reading
- ▶ Getting to know the cold-reading tools
- ▶ Obtaining useful information from sitters
- ▶ Predicting the future

Cold reading is the most common technique that psychics use to create the illusion that they're speaking with the dead and know details about people's lives that they'd otherwise be unable to know. Of course, they aren't doing any such thing. In this chapter, I show you what psychics and others are really doing and provide some cold-reading tools and techniques so that you can perform these illusions, too.

A good cold reader can truly rock your thoughts and shake your foundations if you don't know what's going on. Many of the things I demonstrate in this chapter may seem a tad lame on the printed page, but a psychic encounter in the right setting and with the right delivery can leave audiences gob-smacked. People honestly have difficulty understanding how psychics are so accurate. Falling for it doesn't mean that the audience is stupid or gullible, just that they're human.



Over the years, plenty of charlatans have used cold-reading techniques to exploit vulnerable people and separate them from their money. The information that I introduce you to in this chapter is purely so that you can incorporate the skills into your mentalism performances and improve your shows and the entertainment you provide.

Introducing Cold Reading: A Pretty Old Scam

Throughout the world, you can find psychics providing so-called readings for anyone willing to grease the wheels with some hard cash. Plenty of people are giving such advice because plenty of people want it. Many members of the public are looking for some kind of hope for the future, for something or someone to fill the uncertainty they feel in their lives.



The problem with getting a psychic reading is that, on the balance of probabilities, it's fake. In my opinion, you have a better chance of obtaining useful information about your future from a dancing monkey.

A *cold reading* can be loosely described as the apparent delivery of relevant information about someone's past, present and future during a consultation between a *reader* who provides the information and a *sitter* who's looking for guidance of some kind. Such readings are called *cold* because the reader starts off cold, looking for things that help home in and create the impression of having information nobody else could possibly know. As the reader *hits* on information, the reading becomes warmer and warmer until eventually the reader has something that's correct or at least resonates with the sitter. Contrary to popular belief, the cold part doesn't really refer to the unfeeling nature of fraudulent psychics!

Readers sometimes seriously claim to have special spiritual or paranormal gifts. Or they claim to have studied astrology, palmistry, graphology, phrenology, psychometry – or any combination of these things. In most cases, a sitter has to pay the reader for the service.



Understanding how cold reading works

A reading consists of two main components:

- ✓ **What the reader talks about:** This aspect is thematic; it sets up the stage of the reading and ensures that the reading is relevant to the sitter.
- ✓ **What the reader actually says:** This aspect is directly related to the theme or direction of the conversation.

Most sitters want to know about the following:

- ✓ **Health:** Their own or that of a loved one.
- ✓ **Love:** Relationships, sex, children and family.
- ✓ **Money:** Career, jobs, bills, purchasing and opportunities.



Other aspects also exist, of course, but these three themes pop up all the time because statistically they're the subjects that preoccupy people.

Effective cold reading is give and take: a combination of prepared statements (also called 'canned' statements) and spontaneous statements that all flow along the thematic line. These statements are designed to:

- ✓ Connect to the sitter's character.
- ✓ Seem fact-based or related to facts relevant to the sitter.
- ✓ Serve to extract more information that you can use during the reading.
- ✓ Offer some kind of advice, such as predictions about impending events or what the future holds.

Discovering the different types of cold readings

Although a variety of generic psychic readings exist – from horoscopes published in national newspapers to the automated text-your-number-and-a-code-for-a-reading services – you don't get into the realms of cold reading until some measure of active communication takes place between two or more parties.

In-person readings can be offered intimately or by telephone, e-mail and even by computer chat. You often find readings offered at local psychic shops and fairs.

Sometimes, readings are used in group settings – a particular favourite of TV psychics. I've also seen so-called spiritualists and even some dubious churches using cold reading.

Meeting the clients

Many individuals get readings for entertainment purposes or as a passing curiosity, whereas others take it very seriously and seek answers to life's most important and pressing questions. But whatever the reason, those seeking out readings are as diverse as society itself. In my experience, sitters are predominately female, although I'm not entirely clear on why this is the case.

Some large and small organisations also employ psychics to give them readings:

- ✓ **Companies:** For advice on increasing profits and becoming more competitive in their markets.
- ✓ **The Police:** To solve crimes and locate missing persons.
- ✓ **Leaders of political parties:** To help make better decisions.

- ✓ **Property managers and letting agents:** For info on prospective tenants.
- ✓ **US government:** For national security reasons.
- ✓ **City traders:** In an effort to get inside financial information.



The art of cold reading deception is incredibly complex. Humans have thousands of years of collective experience, tools, methods and techniques that enable people to, well, scam other people. Many of the most intelligent people in the world have been easily taken in by those with a basic education, a notepad and a nail writer (a tool that allows covert writing).

Understanding the Cold-Reading Process

In this section, I get down to the nitty-gritty of cold reading, which is a deceptive communication strategy using a variety of techniques and procedures. When combined and used at the right time with the right person or group, these techniques can yield details that the reader can act on to create the illusion of a psychic reading. My focus throughout is on how you as a mentalist can most effectively use these procedures to entertain an audience.

What cold reading isn't

A lot of misconceptions exist about the nature of cold reading, and so I want to clear up a few points:

- ✓ **Body reading:** Plenty of people (especially mentalists) claim that they've developed the unique ability to read furtive behavioural cues and micro-expressions. Although the body does give away certain thought processes (such as facial expressions that suggest a known emotion), body reading is far from being a perfect science and has significant limitations in real-world practice. Often, performers who pretend to have such abilities use trickery, including cold reading, to make sure that they get things right.
- ✓ **Trained observation:** Although the media loves to use this term to suggest that, for example, a police officer's statement is likely to be more accurate than the average, untrained witness, strong evidence suggests that trained observers aren't as reliable as people think. Your ability as a mentalist to pick up subtle clues may well play a role in cold reading, but the ability is much more than that.
- ✓ **Trolling:** Although people who use cold reading do fish for information, the activity isn't simply a fishing expedition: the fishing is employed to help construct the whole puzzle (to mix metaphors).
- ✓ **Vague guessing:** Any skilled cold reader has the ability to give sitters information that appears to relate and apply to them, by turning a vague statement into something more specific and continuing down the path from cold to warm to hot. Nevertheless, cold reading isn't all about being vague and general.



On the whole, cold reading is about *appearing* to providing accurate information – not necessarily providing accurate information. The deceptive strategy is designed to give the impression of legitimacy.

Accepting regular failure

When cold reading, you're going to bomb; a lot! Failure is a standard part of the process, but that's okay. Mentalism contains a concept called the *too perfect theory*, which suggests that being perfect and always getting things right reduces your credibility.



The good news is that people tend to look for and latch onto information they want to hear (known as *confirmation bias*), and so even though you may miss four out of five times, your sitter is likely to remember the one piece of info that you got dead on.

Following a sequential process

Before you begin any reading, you need to take several steps to set up the process. To greatly increase your chances of success in providing an enjoyable experience, do the following:

1. Create an appropriate setting.

Psychics' parlours are designed to be intimate settings that reek of mystical power and timeless ritual. The medium sits facing the sitter across a small table and delivers forth insights into the sitter's life, for money. The walls contain photographs suitable to the ambiance, tone and setting of the room. Soft, mellow music plays in the background. Even what you wear, how you comb your hair and the way you speak impacts the overall setting and therefore the success of your mentalism illusion.



Your goal is to connect with the sitter and help create a setting that encourages the person to participate and trust you, and so every aspect needs to project that ethos. Making sure that the person is comfortable and connects with the surrounding environment increases the entertainment value and success of your performance.

2. Convey a welcoming aura at the initial meeting.

Most of the people I know who give readings are naturally affable, likeable and reasonably charismatic. They like people, or at the very least, they're more than capable of masking any dislike! To perform effective cold readings, you need to discover how to convey those kinds of positive qualities when you meet someone for the first time. After all, you get only one chance to make a first impression – so it had better be one that encourages the sitter to like you and feel comfortable around you.



Smile, speak with a gentle and affirming tone, and be complimentary but not fawning. Your goal is to be welcoming, reassuring and edifying to alleviate any fear or trepidation your sitter may be feeling.

Some people honestly believe in psychic phenomena, and many cultures around the world, in fact, are inextricably linked to mysticism. Because of this, I reassure the sitter that there's no need for apprehension if I see any sign of it in her face, language or body positioning. Be sure to explain to her that you only see good things – that you've focused your energy and spent many years developing your abilities so that you can provide good information.

3. Explain the meeting of the minds.

Describe the reading to your sitter as being an interpretation of information or messages and not something perfect that's carved in stone.



Throw out some deliberately wrong statements during a cold-reading session. One way to turn misses into hits is to encourage your sitter to work with you to interpret those messages, which can then yield something useful. In other words, you co-op your sitter and encourage her to help you understand the information.

For example, if you're using tarot cards you may say, 'When I examine the cards, the messages sometimes come through very clearly to me. In other cases, it's like I'm looking through a fogged-up window on a winter's day, and then the message may well be much clearer for you.'

Encourage your sitter to be an active participant. Make sure that she understands that the messages, vibrations, spirits or whatever way in which you decide to present the illusion may not always come through clearly. You're just an instrument, and so the sitter needs to help you understand what's being sent.

4. Advertise your credentials.

Humans tend to trust the views, opinions and advice of authority figures, and so a key component of cold reading is making sure that your sitter believes you to be an authority and that what you say is important. After all, people don't want their tonsils taken out by a plumber.

People tend to look at degrees, certifications, membership of professional organisations and the like as proof that a given person is qualified. Sitters are much more likely to accept you if they believe that you're experienced, educated and know what you're doing. This natural assumption can also be used against people, though; I know of a number of books (and even some professional psychics) that advocate inventing credentials, which is not only inappropriate but also may be illegal. I've always believed that honesty is the best policy, even if I'm in character.



Design your business card, flyer and website so they tell people that your psychic readings are of the highest quality and totally to be trusted.

5. Establish the veracity of your props.

Use old-looking, worn tarot cards because they appear more legitimate than a set that's freshly unwrapped from its package. Also, an expensive crystal ball makes more sense than a child's snow globe. Handle all your props with a sense of reverence and authority: share with your sitter why they matter. A brief history and sales pitch about your chosen divination tools help to set the stage and ensure that the sitter is sold (for lack of a better word) on the whole event.

- 6. Make excuses before you begin.** As you introduce yourself and share how you can assist your sitter, add a disclaimer to help sell the performance. Say something like, 'During your reading, I'll be receiving messages. Sometimes they're clear. Other times they're murky. And sometimes I may make mistakes about what they mean. The messages that come through to me aren't always for you either but may be for someone you know simply because you're connected to them. On occasions, I may misunderstand what the spirits are telling me. I'm just an instrument and, like all humans, fallible. I just want to make sure you fully understand that.'

- 7. Ask about recent readings.** Like a well-trained doctor or pharmacist, you need to know whether your 'patient' has been seeing anyone else about her problems. You want to know so that you don't say something totally different to what the person's been told in the past.

Ask your sitter directly whether she's had a reading before and how long ago it was. And most importantly, find out what she was told during the last reading. That way, you can come into line with your similar, albeit better, reading.



- 8. Always get the sitter to say 'yes'.**

When giving a cold reading, try to get the person agreeing with you in the early stages of the performance. The more she does, the more you've sucked her in – so to speak. You want to turn a 'maybe' into a 'yes' and a 'no' into a 'maybe'. In the later section 'Getting people to say yes', I show you how to do so.

Appearing authoritative

When I put on a Victorian séance, I make sure that the set has a series of weighty books on the shelf all relate to 'my field'. You need to create

an air of authority that grabs your sitter's attention and helps her feel special and in the presence of an important person.

Tooling Up for Effective Cold Readings

In this section, I describe some easy ways to improve the impact of your cold-reading sessions.

Identifying useful cold-reading statements

Central to cold reading is the use of certain statements that effectively elicit information and cover your errors. I describe some favourites in the following sections.

Using Barnum statements

In 1948, a psychologist named Bertram R. Forer asked 39 university students to undertake a personality evaluation. They took a test involving a series of questions, and one week later Forer provided each of them with a personality analysis consisting of specifics that were unique to them.

The students read and rated the analysis from 0 to 5, with 0 being not accurate and 5 being very accurate. The average score was 4.2: nobody scored below 3 and only two students scored below 4. Pretty much every student felt that the analysis was an accurate description of what they believed about themselves. The only problem is that Forer gave *everyone* the same statement, which was full of generalities:

- ✓ You have a great need for other people to like and admire you.
- ✓ You have a tendency to be critical of yourself.
- ✓ You have a great deal of unused capacity, which you have not turned to your advantage.
- ✓ While you have some personality weaknesses, you are generally able to compensate for them.
- ✓ Disciplined and self-controlled outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure inside.
- ✓ At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing.
- ✓ You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.
- ✓ You pride yourself on being an independent thinker and do not accept others' statements without satisfactory proof.
- ✓ You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others.

- ✓ At times you are extroverted, affable and sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary and reserved.
- ✓ Some of your aspirations tend to be pretty unrealistic. Security is one of your major goals in life.

Nothing was unique about the analysis; each person received the same result and believed it. Similar tests confirm these results and show that scores are generally much higher if the person receiving the information trusts the authority of the provider, believes the information to be unique and sees the details provided as being mostly positive and edifying.



Science is just beginning to understand some of the complexities of why humans are willing to believe unfounded and often strange things, but 'psychics' have used this ruse for decades. You can also make great use of these insights to amaze and entertain your audiences. The great American showman P.T. Barnum knew this very well, which is why these statements have come to be associated with him. He was famous for stating: 'There's a sucker born every minute.'

Playing things safe with yin-and-yang statements

The preceding section contains a perfect example of a *yin-and-yang* statement (a specific-sounding but in fact general one): 'At times you are extroverted, affable and sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary and reserved'. Obviously, people reading this statement are being told that they're sometimes introverted and sometimes extroverted, which pretty well defines everyone on the planet.



This kind of statement is very safe and easy to come up with when cold reading: just stay away from anything quantifiable.

Delving into character with Sheehy statements

Sheehy statements are related to the sitter's character and based on the seminal *Passages* penned by Gail Sheehy in 1976. Contained in the pages of this little gem are facts related to adulthood and the phases that many people go through as they age:

- ✓ **Teen years to around 18:** Before age 18, average teenagers want to leave home, get a job and a driving licence and begin to break ties with their parents as they set out to become their own person. This time is for developing a sense of identity and direction (sort of).
- ✓ **Late teens and early twenties:** During this phase, people try on a variety of hats, belief systems and ideologies. They may not directly understand it, but they're starting to discover who they really are, what they believe and how their identity is wrapped up in those things. But behind the

façade of strength their lack of maturity attracts them to fads and foibles that are often the polar opposite of who their parents are, when in reality they're desperately aware that they're not really capable (just yet) of taking care of themselves without help. This time is, in every sense of the word, a period marked by being torn between the desire for independence and the need for security.

- ✓ **The twenties:** During this period people's dreams begin to take shape. Their inner selves take a bit of a back seat to the need to develop professionally. Impulses are better controlled and maturity begins to take root. People tend to find mentors, read more books and engage in educational programmes that help them grow. They also tend to commit to things that are easily reversible while insisting that they've found their true calling and direction.
- ✓ **Around thirty:** This phase of life is when people tend to get some new vitality and want to pull themselves out of any ruts. They're not anxious but ready for change and growth. People often experience an almost visceral feeling of wasting time. They may change careers or embark on new adventures for a number of years.
- ✓ **Mid-thirties:** People tend to settle back down a bit and become more focused on their careers than ever before. They feel that time is running out on their goals and want to re-dedicate themselves to getting things done before 'it's too late'.
- ✓ **The early forties:** People get restless again. They may feel that they no longer want to be with their long-term partners; many people become single again and move on. This phase is a time of reassessment and change that carries on from the thirties but becomes more pronounced if no goals or dreams are met.
- ✓ **The mid- to late forties:** People start to understand that they're not the person they used to be and begin to refocus on stability. A renewal of purpose begins to permeate life, especially if they've dealt with crises previously and overcome challenges that shook them in their mid- to late thirties or early forties. But people may also be faced with a sense of stagnation if they haven't dealt with earlier challenges. Either way, they're starting to look at retirement options and have likely given up on achieving the dreams they had when younger. A sense of resignation may occur.
- ✓ **The fifties and beyond:** People start desperately trying to find a way toward retirement. They find a rush of emotions that they've never experienced and may, on occasion, find themselves sullen and depressed. Tears can flow for no clear reason. While these apply to both genders, we commonly hear this time of life for men referred to as the *male menopause*, but more properly it's known as the *climacteric* period of life that

men or women can go through. It can be a difficult time. But if people can work through it, they reach a new level of happiness and enjoyment that often comes through a no-nonsense approach to life. Having survived life, people are generally happy to do as they like. They tend to be strong individuals – confident, outspoken and secure. They know what they like and what they don't, and they tend to get what they're after.

The more you understand the insights, the easier you find applying them to your sitter. All this information helps you to better understand people. By taking these general phases into account, you can come up with statements that truly fit the bill and chime with almost anyone at a certain age. You can say something like:

Developments in your personality started early when you were a child. Clearly you felt somewhat alone, even around other children and relatives. I can see that you felt very different. What's this around age 16 or 17? There's some kind of event. Something happened. It looks like turmoil.

You give the sitter an opportunity to fill in the blanks. Continue with:

These feelings of isolation continued until you finally realised nobody will ever truly understand you. And you've learned to appreciate yourself more over the years. Not always mind you, and some things you still don't understand. But it's much better than when you were younger.

And so on. You can give an entire cold reading based on what you know about the phases of life and how they relate to the sitter.

For people in their early twenties when a career isn't fully developed, you can say:

People don't always understand you. In fact, you often feel frustrated about yourself and your choices. In particular, you feel a sense of frustration about your talents not being used to their fullest, or given the recognition you know they deserve. It's frustrating that you don't have the opportunity, at least not as often as you'd like, to showcase those talents.

For someone in their late thirties or early forties, you may say:

If you're honest with yourself, you're wondering what happened to all those dreams you had when you were younger. All the goals and ambitions. Something's troubling you; something you've considered doing or experiencing that you've thought about off and on for a while. What is it?

These kinds of statements connect with people. Like any cold-reading technique, include open-ended questions that provide the opportunity for your sitter to participate.



Bringing up childhood memories

As the preceding section shows, many people have similar experiences while they're growing up. In particular, children's cultural experiences are often similar and you can use these in your cold reading.



Here's a favourite example of a typical childhood memory statement that most sitters connect with: it relates to a hobby or passion that they no longer have an interest in. You may say, 'When you were younger, you had a hobby. Or maybe it was an interest. Something you were good at and really enjoyed. There seemed to be a lot of promise, too. But for some reason, I don't see it anymore. What was it?'

Statistically, this interest or hobby is artistic or athletic in nature. You can guess more specific details depending on what you can already tell about the sitter. For example, a larger man may have played a particular sport at school, or if you get the feeling a person is creative, she may have painted or played a musical instrument in her youth.



Sitters graft their own memories and experiences on to what you say in an effort to make sense of the statement.

Sticking to generalities and guessing

A *generality* is a statement that appears factual because it's structured and easy to accept and yet leaves plenty of room for you to develop into something more specific to the sitter. For example, one of my favourite cold-reading sessions focused on geography. It started as a casual reading for an older woman I met at a party in Hollywood, whose name was Muller. This surname allowed me to lead off with a fuzzy fact:

Me: 'I see a connection to somewhere in Europe. A place that's both warm and cold depending on the time of year. It's definitely not Italy, but close. Yes, I think it may be Germany or Austria?'

I made an educated guess of Germany or Austria based on her last name. In this case it was Muller, which is one of the most common surnames in Germany. In the English language, the name is associated with Miller, a surname derived from an occupation. Because I'm familiar with these details, it's easy for me to lead off a conversation with a fuzzy fact. To be good at cold reading, take the time to study these kinds of things.

When I made an educated guess, I had no idea if or how she may be connected to those countries. Fortunately she was and so I massaged the situation and encouraged her to provide more.

Sitter: 'Yes, my grandfather came to the United States from Germany!'

Me: 'Yes, I feel him here with us. Wow. A strikingly strong-looking man!'

I based this statement on the fact that she was around 60 years old. Simple mathematics told me that her father would've been in his twenties when she was born, which meant her grandfather would be around 100 years or older. Logic suggested that he'd passed on (and was communicating with me!) but if, remarkably, he was still alive, I'd have said that the person I was seeing must be her great-great grandfather. An out is always available if you think ahead and keep your cool. I based the 'strong' comment on the fact that men nearly always seem strong to children. People rarely see their grandfathers as anything else. When I said that, she straightened up, looked almost shocked and I saw her lip tremble a little bit.

Sitter: 'Yes, he was a strong man.'

Me: 'Why am I getting Berlin?'

Sitter: 'Well, I don't know. He was from Cologne.'

Me: 'Maybe it's just a place he visited or maybe other members of your family are from there. But I'm definitely seeing Berlin for some reason. Did he move around or stay in Cologne before moving to America?'

Sitter: 'You know he did work in another city. My mom told me that before they moved to California, she didn't see him a lot when she was growing up.'

I now knew where he was from and that he'd worked away from home. What she said told me that the grandfather we were talking about was on her mother's side and that her mother was also in Germany as a child. I then moved from cold to warm and into trying to narrow things down with regard to who he was.

Me: 'I can see him dressed in a uniform. Was he a soldier?'

Sitter: 'He was in the First World War.'

Me: 'I'm getting an ambulance!'

Sitter: 'He was hurt in the war!'

Me: 'Yes, but he was okay and when the war ended he wanted to forget it and be with the people he loved. He wanted a family and a future. Is that true?'

Sitter: 'That's how he met my grandmother! She was a nurse!'

Given his approximate age, a good chance existed that he'd also served in the military and before the late 1960s most countries practised conscription

so most men wore a uniform at some point. If he hadn't, I'd have asked about work outfits because milkmen, postmen and so on all wear uniforms.

The ambulance thing was a lucky guess. Obviously, people who fight in wars can be injured. I knew that the First World War was the first major war in which machines became a major player on the battlefield. Even if he hadn't been hurt, he'd have seen people hurt or worse. The fact that she was able to fill in the blanks made it seem miraculous, even though she made the connections, not me.

Relying on statistics and demographics

Statistical and demographic data are great for using in cold readings, and these days you can easily access such data online at the click of a button. Research some trends for age groups and pay attention to cultural differences. Here are some examples of statistics you can use:

- ✓ Most men played an instrument in school, if only for a short while.
 - ✓ Every man has had a moustache or beard at some point, even if you've never seen them with one.
 - ✓ Loads of women have clothing at home that they've bought but never worn.
 - ✓ Most men have a suit in their wardrobe they can't fit into, because they gain weight as they age.
 - ✓ Most people have a memento purchased on a trip on display or a T-shirt from a trip.
 - ✓ Lots of families have visited a theme park and have photos in an album immortalising that trip.
 - ✓ People often have books on their shelves that are related to a passing hobby or interest that nobody in the house cares about anymore.
- Fishing is the number one pastime in the world. More people, especially men, fish than partake in any other sport, including football.
- ✓ Most women have a set of earrings with one missing.
 - ✓ Jigsaw puzzles are a favourite pastime and perfect for talking about someone's deceased mother or grandmother.
 - ✓ A lot of men have at least one scar on their left knee.
 - ✓ Most families have a box of old photos or some old mementos, toys or military medals.
 - ✓ Keys that don't fit any lock in the house are nearly always still around. Maybe they were for a previous residence or an old car that was sold.
 - ✓ Go into any bathroom and you're likely to find out-of-date medicine.
 - ✓ Most homes have a pack of playing cards in a drawer somewhere, probably with one card missing.
 - ✓ A good chance exists that people have an old broken watch or some electrical item that they never got rid of.
 - ✓ Most homes have a 'to do' note attached to the fridge.
 - ✓ People probably keep out-of-date magazines.
 - ✓ A lot of people have a calendar from a previous year still on the wall or slung in a drawer.



Guessing is a great part of cold reading; sometimes you just nail something (or appear to anyway). You can say things such as, 'For some reason I'm getting a name beginning with J' and then look for a reaction. If it's positive or the person's interest appears piqued, you can roll with it. 'Yes, definitely a name that starts with J. Is it a man?' If the sitter says no, you just affirm it by saying, 'No, I didn't think so.' Trust me; this technique can seem very real and intimate.

Acquiring and using general knowledge



Your cold-reading skills improve the more you know. Broaden your mind: read, read and then read some more because doing so helps you guess more accurately and make statements that are likely to be true. Memorise common names from various generations and typical jobs people do when they're growing up. For instance, a lot of young boys had a paper round and many young girls did babysitting.

Hedging your bets

Use words and statements that don't infer a concrete commitment, such as *probably*, *sometimes*, *occasionally* and *often*, as opposed to words such as *always*. These softer words give you a way out when you want to split hairs.



Splitting hairs is when you begin a portion of your reading by using a statement (such as one from the earlier section 'Using Barnum statements'), but you want to use only a portion of it to probe for a hit. For example, you may say, 'You tend to be critical of yourself.' The moment your sitter agrees, you can continue with, 'In fact, you're often quite hard on yourself when you make a mistake.' If you get another hit continue down that road.

If on the other hand the person doesn't agree with the first statement, you can reverse it by saying something like, 'But this is a tendency you overcame a long time ago and it doesn't give you trouble these days.'

Getting people to say yes

To get a sitter to say 'yes' moving on from a 'maybe' or a 'no', deliberately modify your language as you talk. When you understand how, you can easily change the entire meaning of the conversation. For instance, consider the following words:

- ✓ **But:** This word cancels out the preceding thought: whatever you said before is of less value or outright negated. If I say to my love interest, 'I love you, darling, but you and I aren't the people we once were,' I sound as though I'm about to break up with her. Actually, I'd fully expect to get slapped, because anything after the word 'but' in the English language is generally taken as a fact.
- ✓ **And:** This word is a linking word that allows you to connect together whatever comes before and after it as if they're one fact.
- ✓ **See, notice, know, aware:** These implying words change the significance of a statement you make and suck the person back in if it wasn't a hit, even when something isn't true and relevant to the sitter. Suppose you say something like, 'I'm getting the impression that you've had a problem with becoming angry too easily in the past.' When the person disagrees, you immediately follow up with, 'Yes, but you're aware that you could be that way if you weren't so controlled?' The words 'yes' and 'but' allow the sitter to agree with you, even though it wasn't with what you'd previously stated. Nevertheless, it feels that way and you achieve your goal of getting another 'yes' answer.

So, after you start the conversation off with something very general and based on the person's age, gender or whatever (for example, 'I'm seeing an issue to do with a relationship; does that mean anything to you?'), whatever the sitter says use 'and' or 'but' to add to or limit the statement, as follows:



- ✓ If the person says 'yes', follow that line. Whenever possible add the words 'yes, and . . .' to anything that's even remotely a hit. For example, 'yes, and there's also a money issue here that's somehow tied into this relationship issue.'
 - ✓ If the person says 'no', just start off the next thing you say with 'but . . .'; for example, 'but this pressing issue is affecting a relationship, perhaps you just don't see it yet.'
 - ✓ If you get yet another no response, don't sweat it. Just always follow 'no' with 'but' and simply say, 'but actually, they are . . .' and move on.
- You can also use 'and' to tie things together just as if the sitter had said 'yes'. If the person says, 'Well, it's about money, not a relationship', you may say, 'and relationships can be damaged when money is involved.'
- ✓ If you sense any hesitation or objection and you've already used 'but', inject 'see', 'notice', 'know' or 'aware' to move things forward.



Keep things going with 'yes, and . . .' when you get a hit and 'but . . .' when you get any sort of 'no' answer. You don't have to know what's going on; just *seem* as though you do!

Handling negative responses

At some point you're bound to run across a less than co-operative sitter or someone who doesn't connect with you and wants to make sure that you know it. No worries. Handle negative responses in the following ways:

- ✓ **Keep going no matter what.** Persistence is one of the most effective ways to deal with an objection or negative response. Initially, apply the 'but' response that I share in the preceding section. Then look puzzled or confused and encourage the sitter to share part of the responsibility with questions such as, 'Are you positive that there's no connection here to what I'm seeing?' This line of questioning puts the person on the spot. Finally say, 'I don't understand why this is so strong if it doesn't apply to you, but I don't want you to force a fit.' You may even encourage the person to try to make a fit, but if you still keep getting objections, just move on.
- ✓ **The sitter can't remember.** You can blame a 'no' on the sitter's poor memory by presenting a miss as if the person has forgotten.
- ✓ **The sitter doesn't know the connection.** Simply suggest that the sitter may not know whatever you just shared.
- ✓ **The connection will be revealed soon.** The moment the sitter gives a negative response, say 'but it will become relevant to you in time; watch out for it'.
- ✓ **The connection is embarrassing.** After a miss, say something like 'You know what, I'm getting the sense that this wasn't talked about. Perhaps it's embarrassing. I think that's why nobody knows. And that's okay; it's nothing to worry about.'
- ✓ **The connection doesn't matter.** In certain situations, just shrug your shoulders, apologise and move on. Simply say, 'It doesn't matter. I may have the detail wrong.' You can end just about any objection by simply saying, 'I did tell you that I'm not correct 100 per cent of the time. I wish I could be, but then again, don't we all?'

Extracting Information

To be an effective cold reader, you need to be able to pull or elicit information from the sitter. Like Sherlock Holmes, your job is to build a picture in your mind and then feed that image back to the person. In this section, I describe a few ways to extract the information you need directly from the source.

Restating information



Restating information is one of the most devious ways to get a hit when you're cold reading. Just remember a piece of information and later, at an appropriate time, pass it back to your sitter in the form of a reworded question.

Consider the example I use in the earlier section 'Sticking to generalities and guessing', in which I describe speaking with a woman whose grandfather had come from Germany. During the reading she volunteered the fact that her mother recalled her own father travelling a lot for work. This statement told me that the man was from the sitter's mother's side of the family. Later during the reading I said, 'He's telling me your mother was his daughter. Is that correct?'



When used subtly, restating information looks just like a direct hit and works every time.

Asking direct questions

When cold reading, nothing yields a more accurate result than asking someone a question directly and getting an appropriate answer. As you're presenting a psychic reading and not a magic trick, asking direct questions is perfectly reasonable. (Magicians often get nervous about obviously questioning someone because they're afraid of 'being caught'.)

The vast majority of people who want a reading aren't looking for proof that you actually have 'the gift'; they probably already trust psychics and the tools psychics use. As a magician, it took me a little while to understand that followers of that particular community don't question those who present themselves as 'instruments of the spiritual world' as they might a magician who claims to have the ability to 'read minds'.

Ask anything you want to know such as, 'Are you currently in a relationship right now?' or 'Who's the person who passed away that you've been thinking of?' You can ask plenty of different questions; just remember to keep with the prevailing theme.

A great opening statement is, 'Most of the people who come to me for a reading have a pressing issue on their mind. They're often looking for advice so that they can make the right decision. What brings you here today?' This statement is intentionally open-ended so that sitters can answer it however they like. Before long they're elaborating and providing even more information. People want to be heard; they want to feel validated and reassured by someone. Don't be afraid to be that someone when you give a reading.

Using indirect questions

In counselling, keeping people talking and getting them to open up or talk about what's on their minds is a common tactic. For example, follow up whatever the sitter says with an open-ended indirect question such as, 'How so . . . ?' Perhaps also follow up something you share with a sitter with, 'Does that make sense to you?', 'Does that sound right?' or 'Does that mean anything to you?' By doing so, you force the sitter to reflect on what you've just shared and try to attach meaning to it.

Veiling your questions

Veiled questions are extremely effective because they're designed to sound like you're making a statement rather than asking a question. Sitters think that they're being given information when, in fact, they're being asked to provide it.

An example of a veiled question is something like, 'I'm definitely getting an impression. Yes, there's definitely a feeling of. Hmmm. I'm seeing that you're involved in a relationship where there were. Huh. I'm not sure. I don't want to say violence, but definitely a feeling that you weren't treated right. Does this make any sense to you?'

The Matryoshka doll

You're no doubt familiar with the Russian 'nesting doll', in which dolls of decreasing size are placed inside one another. The following technique is based on that concept. If your initial statement doesn't elicit a direct hit, just keep peeling back the layers. Here's a brief example:

Reader: 'I want to talk to you about your son. You have a son, don't you?'

Sitter: 'I don't have a son.'

Reader: 'But it's definitely male. Perhaps a son-in-law?'

Sitter: 'No, I don't have one of those either.'

Reader: 'But I'm definitely getting someone connected to you somehow. It's strong, too,

which is why I thought it was your son. Could it be a godson?'

Sitter: 'Well, my sister has a son.'

Reader: 'Yes, and you care about him?'

Sitter: 'Yes, of course.'

Reader: 'Yes, that must be it. I knew it was a son or someone like a son to you. Someone you love and have a relationship with.'

This technique allows you multiple bites at the apple and helps you to keep going until you get a hit. I've seen many psychics work through this process until it's almost comical, but when the reader gets a hit, everything changes and the questioning can become more focused.



Such a question can be about anything: love, money, travel. Throw in whatever details you like and turn what seem like statements into questions. This approach often helps when sitters seem overly reserved or timid: it opens the door for them to discuss things they may not otherwise talk about. In all cases, though, the veiled question needs to appear as if you've already divined something relevant and personal to the sitter.

Forecasting a Perfect Future

Key to giving a successful reading is being able to tell your sitter what her future holds. The following types of predictions are the way to your sitter's heart. You don't need tricks when you can give the person confidence in the future with reassuring words.

Providing a sure-fire future

Certain predictions about your sitter's future can't miss because they're generic and include statements such as: 'I see someone coming into your life unexpectedly, perhaps a friend from the past or someone entirely new to you'; 'be careful with your money, I'm seeing a bad investment or you lending money that you may not get back'; or 'if you're careful, this crisis can be averted.'

Giving em' what they want

People are desperate to have someone tell them that they're going to succeed or get what they want. That's the main reason people get a reading in the first place. If your sitter is hoping for a relationship with someone, her prince charming if you will, tell her 'I see a relationship in your future that's stronger than anything you've ever had before. I can't tell if it's with someone you already know or have a relationship with currently, only that you'll get the one you're hoping for.' A statement like that is good because it validates her desires and doesn't accidentally damage any current relationships. You can make similar statements about any other theme of the reading.

Saying things will get better

These are simple statements that you can make designed to reassure your sitter that things will get better. If she's having problems with a relationship or money, for example, you can say things like, 'I know the job you have has been stressful and you've contemplated changing jobs. I just want you to

know that I see things getting better in the next eight months. I can't determine if that means you'll be in the same job or not, only that I see you happier at work within that timeframe.' If she gets a new job or the one she's in gets better, you get the credit for having seen it in advance.

Knowing the odds

If you flip a coin you have a 50:50 chance of getting the call right, and you can make predictions with the same odds. Psychics are quick to issue hundreds of these predictions because they know they're likely to get a lot of them right.

If your sitter is pregnant, no matter what your prediction of the baby's gender, you can't fail: if you predict a boy and you're right, you're a saint; if you're wrong, simply say, 'The baby is strong, I can feel that. But I'm not always right. It may be a very bold and strong-willed girl.'



As with so much cold reading, home in on the one answer but give yourself a way out if you miss. If you're right, claim that you were right later on. If not, ignore it and move on.

Predicting safely: It happens all the time

You can make perfect predictions by saying that something will happen in the future that's statistically likely to take place (but don't give a time). For example, say to a female sitter of any age: 'I see a child in the future. Definitely.' That child may be her own, a sibling's or even a grandchild. People have children and so predict one showing up.

Something equally likely is, 'I see an accident in the future. I see something broken that wasn't before.' People break things all the time. If you throw in 'I see broken glass' it may be a light bulb, a car window or a broken bottle. I said this to a sitter once who later told me that a falcon flew into her kitchen window about a month after we spoke. She was convinced I was in concert with the devil, whereas I just guessed.

One of my favourites is, 'I see a financial burden that's going to take you by surprise. It's a bill, or maybe a legal issue that you'll have to deal with that you weren't expecting.' This is a normal occurrence in people's lives. I once received a \$600 electricity bill in August! Needless to say, I wasn't prepared for it. Although it doesn't take a psychic to predict that running air-conditioning can get expensive!



Think about your own life and discover a million things to predict that are common to everyone.

Chapter 14

In Cahoots with Co-Conspirators

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting to grips with the conspirator's tools
- ▶ Using codes with a confederate
- ▶ Appearing to communicate mentally
- ▶ Speaking in code with a partner

Conspiracy theorists aren't always crazy. After all, if conspiracies didn't exist, the authorities wouldn't make laws against them (unless that's all a conspiracy, of course). The truth is that two or more people often work together to stack the mentalist deck, so to speak, in their favour.

Although a lot of mentalists today don't like the idea of using stooges or confederates, I have no problem with it and neither did the fathers of mentalism.

Appearing to be a mentalist genius is simple when you have someone else doing all the work for you, covertly feeding you the information on a silver platter. In this chapter, I describe how to work and communicate secretly with stooges, plants and confederates, often in order to display your psychic abilities – all in the name of entertainment, of course (and if you become the life and soul of the party at the same time, so be it).

Discovering the Tools of Secret Collaboration

When using a co-conspirator in your mentalism performances, you need the tools to be able to communicate covertly and effectively with each other. In this section, I examine the use of secret codes and a couple of high-tech tools, too.

Encoding for secrecy

No book on mentalism is complete without covering many mentalists' favourite tool: the use of secret codes between conspirators. Some of the most famous mentalists worked as partners in two-person shows, and they used a variety of codes that allowed them to astonish audiences around the world.



Before you run out, grab a partner and start dancing, here's a word of caution: make sure that you practise and practise, and when you have the act down, practise some more. Working with two people isn't half the work, it's *twice* the work. And if the two of you aren't totally committed to the act, one side is going to be weaker than the other, which can only lead to embarrassing failure.

Telephoning Ms Wizard

Here's a great routine using a simple but highly effective code. (The later sections 'Deciphering Secret Codes' and 'Communicating with Verbal Codes' cover codes in more detail.)

The Effect: You bring out a deck of cards and ask an audience member to pick one. Then, you call a friend (the wizard) on your phone, and without revealing anything, she's able to tell the audience member what card it is.

The Secret: You've worked out a code in advance so that your friend can determine the identity of the card.

The Performance: The moment you call, your friend answers and listens, but you pretend that the phone's still ringing.



Your friend then runs through the cards, saying to you, 'ace, two, three, four, five . . .' and so on. When she says the card's value, you say, 'Hello Ms _____'. In saying that line, you let the person you've just phoned know that the call is about the trick you've both agreed on in advance.

She now knows the card's value and immediately says to you, 'diamonds, clubs, hearts, spades'. When she hits the suit, you say, 'hold on' and hand the phone over to the audience member so that your friend can tell the impressed person the identity of the chosen card.



Don't call your friend Mr or Ms Wizard, because this trick has been around long enough for variations under that name to appear online. You don't want to identify the trick, so instead come up with a name that your accomplice knows relates specifically to this trick.

Making another phone call

You can perform the same trick listed in the preceding section, but with a twist. I've performed this variation loads of times and it never fails to get a great reaction.

Alternative Method: You force a card (something I describe in detail in Chapter 5) on a volunteer as opposed to her freely picking one. Then, you ask her to dial your friend's number and when she asks for 'Ms ____', your partner in crime tells her the identity of the card.

The Performance: While talking to some new people you offer to demonstrate extra-sensory perception (ESP). Break out a deck of cards, show both sides, mix them and allow someone to choose a card (which you force). Say, 'Normally, when people pull out a deck of cards and offer to show you something, they perform some boring magic trick and fish through the deck as you wait. That's not what I'm going to do. I have a friend who's able to determine the chosen card. I'm going to call her now.' Pull your phone out and dial your friend. Hand over the phone to the person who chose the card. All the hard work's been done before the performance because you've both agreed on how to handle the trick in advance, and so your friend can say something like, 'I understand you're thinking of a card; is that correct?' The audience member replies in the affirmative. Your friend then plays it up however she likes, finally naming the card.

Transmitting information quietly: Silent transmission

You can communicate in many ways – verbally, in written form, even by sign language. In this section, I introduce you to ways in which you and an accomplice can communicate with each other silently.

Electing to use electronics

As technology advances, enterprising performers are continually figuring out creative ways to incorporate it into dynamic tricks. I've used a variety of commercially produced products (made specifically for mentalism) and found ways to apply existing products to my own tricks.



Stepping outside of the box can benefit you, too; look around at new technology and see what you can use.

Communicating via vibrations

A *thumper* is a remote-controlled vibrating alert device. You can buy countless products to use as a thumper – it doesn't need to be a purpose-built prop sold by magic shops (in fact, many of those products are simply repackaged and resold as something new). The only company producing specific, high-quality (and you pay for it) mentalism electronics that I'm willing to recommend without reservation is Labo Magic, in Denmark. Well, except for my own products, which if I do say so myself, are pretty dang nice too!

Generally, a thumper consists of two main components:

- ✓ A receiver with a small circuit board, a vibrating motor and a battery, all self-contained in a small box or plastic container.
- ✓ A remote with a momentary switch (one that doesn't stay on unless you hold it), which resembles the kind you use for a car alarm; pressing the button activates the thumper.

Depending on the circuitry and coding, the alert may be a single on-off vibration or a vibrating code.

Using a thumper is simple but incredibly effective. You put it in your pocket and your friend takes the remote. During a performance your accomplice is hidden, as it were, in plain sight as a member of the audience and ready to alert you. You can create some crazy effects with a thumper (flip to the later section 'Picking up psychic vibrations' for a great thumper-based trick).

Using radio communications

Radio communication used to be CIA, KGB, FBI, Secret Service and MI5 stuff until the commercial market caught up and made it inexpensive and freely available to anyone with a PayPal account. I've used radio technology for years with great success. Although the police, the military, private detectives and security firms have used these kinds of products for decades, they're not the only ones (check out the nearby sidebar 'Shortwave short cuts').

The most useful kinds of radio devices on the market use the covert 'spy' earpieces produced, like a lot of other things, in China. But manufacturers are also working on this technology in Europe, too. You can also access 'spy' stores online to find something useful along these lines.

Normally, a complete radio set includes a flesh-coloured earpiece, which fits pretty deep into the ear canal, a receiver unit that may be built into something like a wallet or simply held on a neck loop, and a transmitter. Some kits come with a walkie-talkie and others connect to a mobile phone or anything with a mini-jack (such as an MP3 player).

Shortwave short cuts

So-called faith healers, such as Peter Popoff, often use radio communication devices in their performances. Popoff led followers to believe that he had a 'God-given' ability to supernaturally

divine audience members' addresses and specific illnesses. Later, people discovered that his wife Elizabeth was feeding him the information covertly with a radio device.

The most recent radio technology devices aren't radio frequency-based at all, but they do use alternative broadcast and communication technologies. They're great for connecting to a mobile phone, which can be left on a call and simply put in your pocket or face down on a table. The earpieces are so small that nobody ever sees them.

Deciphering Secret Codes

This section focuses on tricks you accomplish by 'reading' secret codes that your partner sends you.

Identifying a secretly touched item

The Effect: Borrow six items from friends and line them up from left to right. They can be a mobile phone, a coaster, a pint glass, a coin, someone's watch or whatever. You turn around while an audience member touches one of the items. When she's finished, you turn back round, and after a little concentration, run your hand slowly over each item. Within seconds you're able to identify which item the person touched.

The Secret: You have an accomplice in the group watching the whole time. She identifies the item for you as you're running your hand from left to right.



The Code: This code is really easy but still pretty cool. The moment your hand hovers over the item, your friend takes a drink of whatever she happens to have in her hand. While you're performing, this moment is the only time the drink touches her lips.

Working with the Four Degrees: Pick a mug

The Effect: You borrow a small object and place it on a table. You leave the room, and while you're gone someone places the item under one of four mugs that have been mixed up. When you get back, you immediately know where the item has been hidden.

The Secret: The way in which your assistant orientates the mug reveals which one the object is under.

The Code: Place four mugs in a line left to right across a table in front of you. Your accomplice can orientate the arm or handle of the mugs in four different

positions: at 0 degrees straight in front of you, 90 degrees to your right, 180 degrees away from you or 270 degrees to your left. In advance, you simply decide on which position signifies the right cup with your conspirator.



You can repeat this trick several times, so long as you change the handle location so it isn't used for the object twice in a row and pre-arrange the pointing sequence in advance. For instance, you can start with it being located at 90 degrees and then 270 degrees and then 0 degrees (pointing straight at you).

Receiving Information Mentally (Yeah, Right!)

In the world of ESP, many people claim that they can 'send' and 'receive' thoughts, even if the other person has no psychic abilities. In fact, none of them has psychic powers, just co-conspirators! The tricks that I reveal in this section show you how to use an accomplice to perform 'psychic' feats.

Demonstrating your psychic ability

In 1950, ESP researcher and author John Campbell came up with the term *PSImonicist* to define a person who exhibits psychic ability. With a partner, you can convince the world (or at least an audience) that you're a PSImonicist too.

The Effect: Three people are allowed to freely select a card and show it to others but not to you. You ask them to 'beam' the card images to you with their minds, and you're able to identify each card.

The Secret: An accomplice sends you the answers via a special non-verbal code that works flawlessly, using blinking for the suit and other physical movements for the numbers.

Sending the card suit with the eyes

If the eyes are the windows to the soul, they're also the windows to discovering the suit of a card. This method may not seem very subtle, but if people don't know someone is helping you, they're not going to catch your friend doing it. Here's the code:

- ✓ **Diamonds:** Blink once, and turn away.
- ✓ **Clubs:** Blink twice, and turn away.
- ✓ **Hearts:** Blink three times, and turn away.
- ✓ **Spades:** Stare directly ahead without blinking.

Communicating numbers via legs, feet and arms

Your co-conspirator places her arms and legs in specific rehearsed ways to reveal the value of the card, as follows: (These codes are also illustrated in images a-m in Figure 14-1.)

- ✓ **Ace:** Both feet directly straight ahead, with only 3 to 5 centimetres (1 to 2 inches) separating them.
- ✓ **Two:** Left foot turns outward to 45 degrees while right foot stays straight ahead; legs spread apart.
- ✓ **Three:** Cross one leg over the other, both hands on knees.
- ✓ **Four:** Toes point inward, as if pigeon-toed.
- ✓ **Five:** Feet cross over one another at the ankles.
- ✓ **Six:** Left leg is close in to the chair, and right leg is stretched out.
- ✓ **Seven:** Knees in touching, feet spread apart.
- ✓ **Eight:** Feet flat and spread apart, elbows resting on knees, leaning forward.
- ✓ **Nine:** Right heel touches left toe (heel to toe); one foot is in front of the other.
- ✓ **Ten:** Arms crossed forming an 'X'; feet straight ahead and about 5 centimetres (2 inches) apart.
- ✓ **Jack:** Arms crossed, legs crossed at knees, one over the other.
- ✓ **Queen:** Arms crossed, legs spread.
- ✓ **King:** Arms crossed, legs outstretched and crossed at the ankles as though you're slouching in the chair.

For more on using movements to convey information that goes well beyond card numbers and suits, check out the nearby sidebar 'Getting the thousand-dollar code for free'.

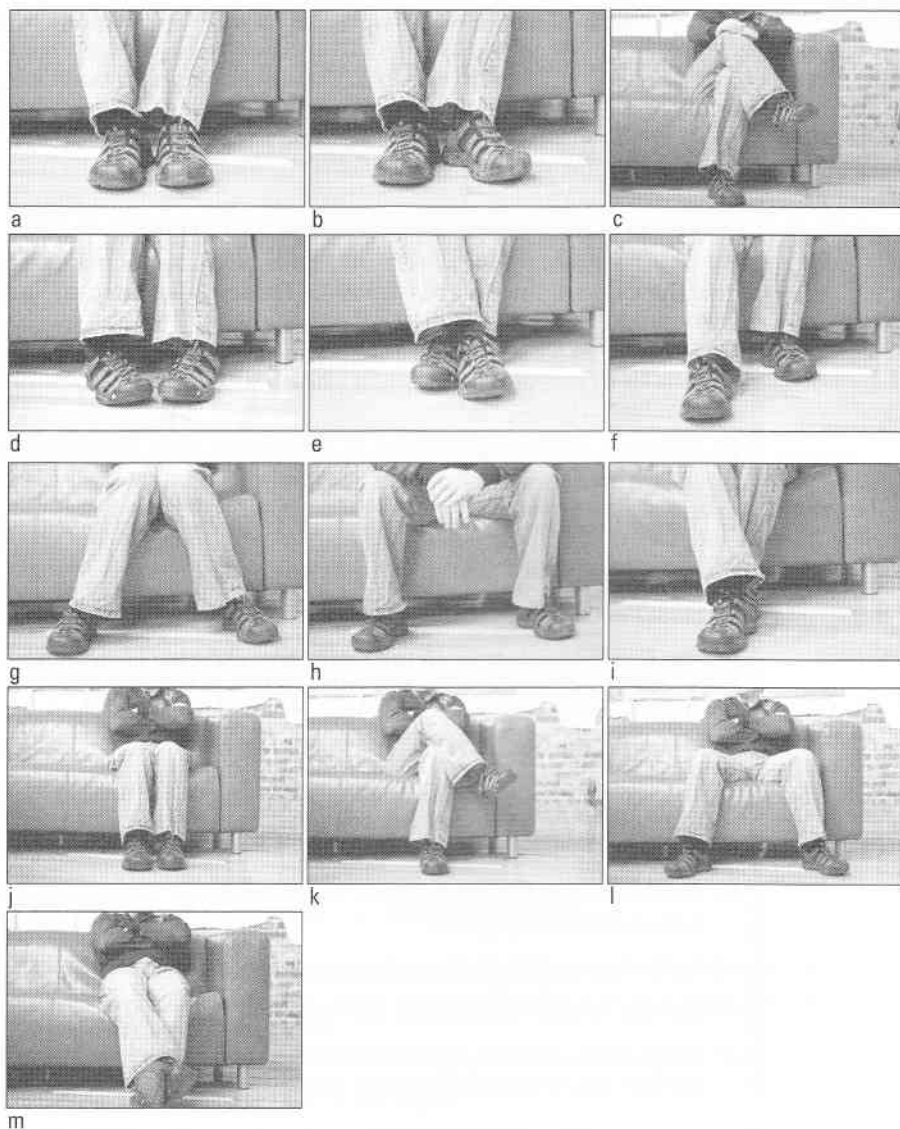


Figure 14-1:
Codes cor-
responding
to different
card values.

Getting the thousand-dollar code for free

This code technique certainly allows you to create some pretty great ‘look, I’m psychic’ moments, but I’m not sure that I’d pay \$1,000 for it. But crazy as it sounds, someone was trying to (and perhaps even succeeded for all I know) sell it for that amount to other mentalists.

If that’s true, whatever you paid for *Mind Magic & Mentalism For Dummies* has already come back to you in spades. Get it, spades? That’s a magic reference . . . oh, forget it!

I give you just enough of the code to get your feet wet. From there, you and your accomplice have to run with it. I have faith in you; I know you can do it.

The essence of the code is to think of as many physical movements as you can and to assign a meaning to each one. Here are some movements and expressions to get you started:

- ✓ Clear throat
- ✓ Bite bottom lip
- ✓ Bite top lip
- ✓ Purse lips
- ✓ Puff out lips
- ✓ Blink eyes once
- ✓ Wink left/right eye
- ✓ Take off glasses
- ✓ Put glasses on head
- ✓ Put glasses on table
- ✓ Scratch left/right ear
- ✓ Rest hand on knee
- ✓ Cough into hand
- ✓ Scratch face

Picking up psychic vibrations

The Effect: You pull out a deck of Zener cards (check out Chapter 5 for more details) and shuffle them. You deal off ten cards in a circle on the table and ask everyone at the table to agree to focus on one card while you turn your back. You plug your ears and close your eyes, and they choose one card. When you turn back round, you hold your hand over the cards and by feeling their mental vibrations you can pick out the card.

The Secret: You have a thumper (an item that I describe in the earlier section ‘Communicating via vibrations’) in your pocket and a friend within the group alerts you to the card the moment your hand hovers over it.

You can dress up this trick however you like, so bring in a personal touch that’s unique to you (Chapter 2 contains loads of tips on designing your persona and performance).

Showing that you can read a stranger's mind

The Effect: You're out with some friends at a nice restaurant. The waitress introduces herself to everyone and offers to take your drinks order. You announce to your friends that you're going to demonstrate your ability to discern a person's thoughts. Before the waitress comes back to take your order, you grab a napkin and write several things down on it. Then, when she returns, you ask her to name her favourite drink, the last book she read and her age. She tells you out loud and you turn over the napkin to reveal that you got every item right.

The Secret: Waiters and waitresses are generally pretty helpful, especially if they think a tip's in it for them. In this case, the waitress is an instant stooge.

The Setup: When you get to the restaurant, select a table out of view of the toilets or the waiting staff's station. Excuse yourself to go and wash your hands. Do it right after the waitress takes the drink order so that you can identify her. Head toward the toilet and approach the waitress and ask her to help you out: tip her there and then. Ask her the questions I suggest (or whatever items you like) and the rest is history. Make sure that you tell her to look surprised after the trick and not to mention you talked to her.

Communicating with Verbal Codes

Humans use verbal language to communicate with one another, and so unsurprisingly people have also come up with ways to speak covertly while talking to one another.

Talking about spoken codes

Verbal and spoken codes are by far the hardest systems to master between mentalist and accomplice. Each person must know the code inside and out and be able to both convey and interpret it accurately in an instant without any mistakes whatsoever. Such codes always involve memorising lots of material and even someone who's got an excellent memory will need to invest in some serious practice. I have friends who've spent countless hours learning and rehearsing these codes so that they can use them smoothly and quickly.



Any code that's verbal in nature must be up to date, comprehensive and undetectable by anyone listening in. Also, it has to be incredibly fast – so fast that nobody listening can possibly keep up with it, let alone figure it out.

Discovering the Zancig code

The Zancigs were a two-person mentalism act that toured the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They devised what many mentalists consider to be one of the most complex codes ever invented. Few codes have risen to their level of expertise over the last hundred or so years, but it can be done.

The Zancig code that I share in this section is a basic two-person verbal code. Like most routines of this nature, one person (traditionally a man) interacts with the audience while the other (traditionally a woman) sits on stage, blindfolded.

The Effect: The man walks around and ‘asks’ questions while in fact ‘telling’ the woman what’s going on. As she interprets the code, she then ‘answers’. Properly performed, the blindfolded person appears to have psychic powers, even though the accomplice is feeding her all the necessary information.



I provide the main crux of the Zancig code for you in the following section, but not an exhaustive list for one simple reason: as you work through it you quickly start to understand how it’s organised, and so you can apply it exactly as you want to.

Letters of the alphabet

The English alphabet comprises 26 letters and so, as a performing duo, you use 26 corresponding short-words to identify a given letter. You send each letter individually to build up to whole words or to lead into other code options. Here’s the code:

I = A, Go = B, Can = C, Look = D, Please = E, Will = F, Quick = G, Then = H, Now = I, Favour = J, Tell = K, See = L, Well = M, I next = N, Go next = O, Can next = P, Look next = Q, Please next = R, Will next = S, Quick next = T, Then next = U, Now next = V, Favour Next = W, Tell next = X, See next = Y, Well next = Z.

In asking for a given letter, say:

I want the letter = A, Go on give this letter = B, Can you give this letter = C, Look at this letter = D, Please give this letter = E, Will you give this letter = F, Quick give this letter = G, Then give this letter = H, Now give this letter = I, Favour this letter = J, Tell this letter = K, See this letter = L, Well this letter = M, I next want this letter = N, Go next give this letter = O, Can you next give this letter = P, Look next at this letter = Q, Please next give this letter = R, Will you next give this letter = S, Quick next give this letter = T, Then next this letter = U, Now next this letter = V, Favour next this letter = W, Tell next this letter = X, See next this letter = Y, Well next this letter = Z.

When communicating letters, whenever you need to repeat a letter, say 'do' or 'next'. For example, 'I want the letter' means A, but 'I do want the letter' means AA.

Numbers

For numbers, you use the previous code identifiers from the preceding section but insert the word 'number' in it to identify the specific number. Here's the code:

I = 1, Go = 2, Can = 3, Look = 4, Please = 5, Will = 6, Quick = 7, Then = 8, Now = 9, Favour = 0.

In the form of a question, the code looks like this:

I want this number = 1, Go on give this number = 2, Can you give this number = 3, Look at this number = 4, Please give this number = 5, Will you give this number = 6, Quick this number = 7, Then this number = 8, Now this number = 9, Favour this number = 0.

To repeat a number, say 'next', as with letters in the code. For example, if you want the number 33, you say, 'please next, give this number'.

Months

Just as with a standard Julian calendar, the Zancigs gave each month a corresponding number using the 'numbers' part of the code:

January = 1, February = 2, March = 3, April = 4, May = 5, June = 6, July = 7, August = 8, September = 9, October = 10, November = 11, December = 12.

Days of the week

Starting with Sunday, the days are given a number too:

Sunday = 1, Monday = 2, Tuesday = 3, Wednesday = 4, Thursday = 5, Friday = 6, Saturday = 7.

Here's an example of using the code to let your accomplice know a member of the audience's date of birth. The audience member whispers it to you, and you ask a question that uses the code, such as, 'quick, can you give me the month and day?' If you look at the code, Quick stands for the number 7 and so the month is July. The word Can stands for the number 3, which is the third day. So the answer the person on the stage gives is 3rd of July.

Years

For specific centuries, you can attribute any word or two words to correspond with whatever you like. The Zancigs used the following:

Try = 1700, Well = 1800s, All right = 1900s.

You need to pick something for the 2000s; I use 'Oh', which they originally used for 1911.

Money

Imagine that you borrow money from someone and want to pass on secretly to your blindfolded partner what kind of coin or note it is. Here's the Zancig's code:

Here what is this = Money

Here I = A silver dollar, Here go = Half dollar, Here can = Quarter, Here look = Dime, Here please = Nickel, Here then = One cent, Here favour = Gold dollar, Here now = A paper dollar, Here tell = Five dollars (paper), Here see = Souvenir coin.

If you want to pass on a paper dollar, you say, 'Here now, what is this?' To pass on the date of a coin as being 1995, you say, 'All right. Now please, what is the date?'



You need to modify this code to suit your currency.

Creating your own variations

As you begin to understand how the Zancig code that I describe in the preceding section is organised, you can apply the same concept to other things.

Names

You can assign a number to a given name. I suggest using common ones, such as James, John, Anne, Mary and so on.

So, if you want to covertly communicate that it's a man's name, you insert the word 'Name'. Following the code, the 'reader' could say, 'You're thinking of a man', which creates the impression that you're receiving psychic information before you've even got started. The cool thing about learning how professionals like the Zancigs used codes is that you can begin to formulate your own ideas. For instance, if you want a woman's name you can insert 'a person's' before the word 'name'. That addition negates that it's male and identifies it as being a female name.

Physical items

You can assign a number to common articles such as a mobile phone, a coin, a pen, a book, a coat or whatever.

Colours

You can apply words or numbers to colours, such as Red = 1, Blue = 2 and so on, or ask a question using the Zancig examples:

I want the colour = Red, Go the colour = White, Can you give the colour = Blue, Look at the colour = Black, Please the colour = Brown, Will you give the colour = Pink, Quick the colour = Green, Then the colour = Yellow, Now the colour = Grey, Favour the colour = Purple.

And the list goes on

When you become proficient at using the Zancig code and how it's constructed, applying the basics to other things becomes easy. You can assign whatever you like to a particular word and order the words as you see fit, for example:

I want the country = England, I want the metal = Steel, I want the jewel = Ruby, I want the star sign = Cancer.

You can use each sentence in this way; each word identifies a number and each code item (that is, colour, metal, whatever) has an associated number. Although these conventions certainly seem daunting, they're not all that complicated. You can see how over the many years that the Zancigs perfected the code, they were able to wipe audiences out and were even asked to perform in front of heads of state in private venues. You never know, get this routine down and you may be sitting in front of the Queen at a private reception some day.

Co-conspirators in action

On the DVD, I demonstrate a few effects from this chapter. First up is the 'Where'd They Hide It' video. In it, I act like I can sense the hidden object under the cup. But really my confederate alerts me when my hand hovers over the right cup with a thumper, as I discuss in the 'Communicating via vibrations' section. Easy peasy.

Next up, I perform an effect called 'Which Hand Is It In?' where I correctly determine

which hand my assistant has hidden a small object in. To accomplish this, I have a confederate off camera who crosses his arm to tell me 'left hand' or hangs his arms to his side to indicate she has it in her right hand in the spirit of the tricks in the 'Deciphering Secret Codes' section.

These are great examples of incredibly convincing effects you can perform using co-conspirators.

Part IV

Performing Bizarre, Strange and Novel Effects

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Oh, that's just something I put on my antenna to help me locate my car in the parking lot."

In this part . . .

The world is drawn to things it doesn't understand. We love tales of spirits crossing over and communicating with the living, with super human feats that defy the known laws of the universe, and all other manner of the strange, weird, different, bizarre and the unexplained. In this part we'll show you how you can be different and strange with your mentalism performance too.

Chapter 15

Demonstrating Extraordinary Displays of Exceptional Human Ability

In This Chapter

- ▼ Winning at games
- ▼ Showing off your super-human abilities
- ▼ Busting clouds for your own amusement

If you've ever dreamed of being a savant or a superhero, now's your chance, because in this chapter I describe tricks that allow you to demonstrate some extraordinary abilities. Practise and perfect them all, and you can appear to be a mathematical genius with incredible endurance who can apparently even influence the clouds!

Excelling at Puzzles and Games

Open up almost any magazine or newspaper and you can find a whole range of puzzles. People love to do them because they're fun, entertaining and challenging. In this section, I show you how to take success at puzzles and games to a whole new level.

Solving Sudoku puzzles with style

French puzzle makers developed this game in the 1880s, but it didn't really become popular until it was published in Japan in 1984. Since then, Sudoku has swept the world and you can find players everywhere.

The Effect: Within seconds of someone calling out a random number, you draw a 4 x 4 Sudoku grid in which all the combinations add up to the randomly chosen number.

The Secret: Most people don't know that Sudoku is based on magic squares (which I describe in Chapter 3) and this trick is no different. The secret is that you memorise a set grid in advance and it works with any number between 25 and 100. All you have to do is some basic maths and fill in the boxes.



You need to memorise or prepare a template grid that works for any number between 25 and 100. The grid you use is the same for every number apart from four of the squares (marked A to D), as shown below:

8	11	B	1
A	2	7	12
3	D	9	6
10	5	4	C

When you fill in the grid, leave squares A, B, C and D blank. You calculate these squares as follows:

- 1. Compute A.** Take the random number that the volunteer provides (the 'X' variable), subtract 21 from it and put the answer in box A. That is, $X - 21 = A$.
- 2. Compute B.** Add 1 to the number for box A and you have the number for box B.
- 3. Compute C.** Add 1 to the number for box B, and you have box C.
- 4. Compute D.** Add 1 to the number for box C, and you have box D.

Assuming that the volunteer supplies the number 37, you can see how all the rows and columns add up below:

8	11	17	1
16	2	7	12
3	19	9	6
10	5	4	18



Use some dramatic pauses and perhaps feigned concentration to increase the tension when performing this trick, and don't fill in boxes A, B, C and D in order; rather, mix up how you reveal the numbers for the best result.

Taking the knight for a tour

This trick is an absolute classic of mentalism, which is both a joy to perform and a joy to experience as an audience member.

The Effect: You draw your audience's attention to a beautiful handmade chessboard on a table in front of you, and invite someone to help you out. After explaining the basics of chess, you proceed to call out numbers so that a knight, moving according to the rules of chess, touches every single square on the board once only.

The Secret: This trick is based on maths and requires rote memorisation of the order of the knight's moves. Combined with clever patter, the Knight's Tour trick is an astounding display of skill. Not only do you appear to memorise the location of the spaces on the board, but you also know which spaces to move the knight to so that it doesn't touch any space twice. To chess players, the trick is pretty cool; to the average person, it's incredible. Actually, you have a crib sheet with the moves on it, so success is guaranteed.

The Setup: Buy a particularly nice chess set for your stage show. (For really large crowds, use a projector to capture what you're doing on screen.) Also pick up a Sanada Gimmick (a flesh-coloured gimmick for concealing objects among your fingers; check out Chapter 9 for more info), write or print the crib on the back and get a blindfold that you can see through (I describe some options in Chapter 10).

Follow these steps:

- 1. Number the chessboard from 1 to 64 with a dry-erase marker pen.**

Start in the top left corner box and progressively move from left to right until that line is complete. Move down to the next line, and repeat the process, starting at the far left box on that line. Continue until you've numbered all 64 boxes.

- 2. Engage the audience and explain the basics of the game of chess.**

While you're numbering the chessboard, tell your audience a bit about the rules and history of chess. Explain that the hardest piece to move is the knight because it can do so only in 'L' shapes.

- 3. Choose a member of the audience to help you out.**

Tell him he's going to cross out each square as you land on it. Allow a random person to choose which square you start from. Reach into your pocket and produce the 'blindfold' and the secret crib, which looks something like this:

01 60 37 53 23 32 62 49

11 45 20 43 08 47 52 34

21 39 26 33 14 64 58 17

04 29 36 27 24 54 41 02

10 12 30 44 07 48 51 19

26 06 13 61 22 63 57 09

35 16 28 55 05 46 42 03

50 31 38 40 15 56 59 18

4. Explain that a chessboard contains 64 spaces.

Say, 'Covering every square gives you about 2080 possible moves. My goal is to make sure that I don't allow the knight, which can only move one space forward and two over, or two forward and one over, to land on the same square twice. No exceptions. I'm going to attempt to make the knight touch each and every square just once!' Say to your helper, 'When I name a square, I want you to put an "X" through it with the pen.'

5. Step away from the board and turn around to face the audience.

The crib needs to be palmed in your hand on the back of the Sanada Gimmick. Say, 'This is hard enough to do when you can see the board, so imagine what it's going to be like for me when I put this on.' Show that your hands are clearly empty as you put the blindfold on, and then rest your hands in front of you, cupped together. Put your right hand on top of the left and just let your head hang.

6. Take a few deep breaths.

Continue with, 'Are you ready? Alright, I'd like, oh, I don't know, someone wearing red to raise his hand.' Say to your first helper, 'If there's more than one person wearing red, please pick one of them for me.' Let him do so and ask, 'Do you have someone? Alright, person wearing red, please call out a number from 1 to 64.' When the person does so, you now have a starting number. Say to your helper, 'Please put the knight on that space and we'll begin.'



7. Turn over the Sanada Gimmick as soon as you receive the starting number – making sure to cup the gimmick and keep it hidden in your hands – and look up that number.

From that point just read down the columns on the crib vertically from top to bottom and state that number for the helper to cross it out. When you reach the end of one column, start again at the top of the next one. Don't forget the starting number so you know where to stop.



Stop from time to time and pretend to be really concentrating. As you get close to the end count up how many squares are left and comment on how much harder the task is getting. Finish up, take off your blindfold and take a bow.

Predicting the pattern of noughts and crosses

When I was a child, I loved noughts and crosses. Here's a nice trick to apply to this simple game.

The Effect: You offer to play a game of noughts and crosses with someone, but warn him in advance that you're a mentalist. Before you begin playing, you hold up an envelope with a prediction sealed inside. You have to start but thereafter you give your opponent a free choice so that he can make his mark in any one of the available squares. You proceed to play alternately until the game is complete. No matter who wins (or if it's a draw), your revealed prediction is correct.

The Secret: Start by putting an 'X' in the centre square. From that point, the trick is just mathematics. Your opponent has only two possibilities – one of the corner squares or a square adjacent to the centre. If he places the 'O' in a corner square, you place an 'X' in the first open square and then move clockwise for the rest of the game. If he places the 'O' in an inside square, you place your 'X' in the first open square and move counter-clockwise thereafter.

The Presentation: Start the game as normal but you must go first. Allow him a free choice and then simply respond to his mark by placing your 'X' clockwise or counter-clockwise in direct response. From that point on, where he places his 'O' doesn't matter; just keep going to the next square in the sequence. At the end of the game, open the envelope to reveal your prediction of 'O-X-O on the top line'.



Your prediction matches because no top or bottom line applies to the finished game: you simply turn the game around so that your prediction ties up correctly.

Tackling crosswords without a cross word

Crosswords are ubiquitous. I have one in my bathroom sitting on the back of the toilet; most doctors' offices have them in the waiting room; and when I fly, I see people doing them at the airport. With a little magic, you can look like a crossword genius.

The Effect: You give a member of the audience an opportunity to choose from several crossword puzzle books sitting on a table. He then thinks of clues to the puzzles and you're able to reveal the answers.

The Secret: Even though this illusion seems utterly impossible, it's relatively straightforward to perform. The concept is so devilishly simple and clever that you'll smack yourself, especially if you're familiar with David Hoy's book test work that I discuss in Chapter 9.

What You Need: Go to any supermarket and buy three different crossword books or magazines that are exactly the same trim-size, have the same kind of paper, are around the same page count and are from the same publisher. Collect another two duplicate copies of one title so you have a total of five crossword books. You also need some rubber cement and perhaps a staple remover, depending on the binding.

The Setup: Carefully remove the covers from the two books without duplicates and then remove them from the two duplicate books. Leave one book intact.

Now follow these steps:

1. Glue the two different covers onto the duplicate books.

If you can just remove the staples, you don't need the glue. When you're finished, you have three crossword books that have different covers but the same interiors. Place the books under something heavy, such as larger books, and let them dry if you glued them.

2. Take one of the duplicate books and complete all the puzzles in it.

Use this completed book as a crib and you're ready to perform. You always exclude this book from being a 'free choice' by forcing a book on the volunteer.



I put a small pencil dot in the corner of the front cover of the crib book so that I don't mix anything up later if I forget which cover goes to which book. Also, most crossword books or magazines use the puzzle number as the page number and they place them in the outer corners of the page. This system makes peeking the number that much easier for you.

The Performance: Ask for a volunteer to help you out and proceed as follows:

1. Address your helper.

Say, 'I love crossword puzzles. They're one of the best mental exercises you can do, especially if you want to take the time to invest in yourself and improve your vocabulary. Most people do crosswords by filling in the blanks, but imagine doing it with nothing but the power of your mind. No pen. No pencil.'

2. Introduce the crossword books.

Continue with, 'On the way here, I picked up these. I had an idea that I thought I'd try with you. I grabbed a few that are designated as being easy. I know that won't offer much of a challenge to most of you in the audience, but it does to me.' Make a point of casually browsing through the crossword books as you speak, but don't settle or stay on any specific page.

3. Use the right book.

You need to get one of the blank crossword books into the volunteer's hands and make sure that you don't allow him to choose the filled-out one. All three books are the same, of course, but you obviously don't want him to see that you filled one out in advance. You can instruct him to just point at one and use the magician's force if needed or simply hand one book out. When he has the book say, 'I'd like you to look through the crossword book and tell us roughly how many puzzles there are.' Have him look at the table of contents or flip to the back of the book and announce the number. Continue, 'Great. Thanks. Now just look at one puzzle and tell me how many clues there are.'

What he says doesn't matter, because this question is just a small convincer to add to the overall perceived impossibility of the trick. Say, 'There are quite a few puzzles in here and even more clues. Go ahead and pick one at random.' Ask him to pass his chosen book back to you.

4. Choose a page.

Riffle the page numbers toward the volunteer and ask him to tell you when to stop. At this point, peek the opposite page number so you know which page to focus on.

When riffling, hold the book in your left hand by the spine with the cover facing you. Grasp the right upper corner with your right hand and allow the pages to cascade toward the person helping you. The instant you stop, you can easily open the entire book toward him without appearing to have seen anything at all. This riffle is the typical method used in many book tests on the market (check out Chapter 9 for loads more book tests).

Open the whole puzzle book facing the volunteer. Turn your head right after your peek and say, 'Okay, you got it?' Get him to take the book, but don't talk about the puzzle number yet.

5. Select a random number in order to choose a puzzle.

Continue with, 'Let me recap a little bit. I brought three different crossword books with me that I picked up tonight. You chose one. Then you randomly chose a page. We know that there are a lot of clues per puzzle too. From what you said, it's quite a few apparently. Here's what we're going to do. I want someone else to choose a random number but, first, tell me how many puzzles are in the book.' Imagine the volunteer says 50.



Look at the audience, point to someone and say, 'Sir, we've not met before? No, I thought not. Please pick a number between 1 and 50. What's that, 37? Okay, 37 it is.'

6. Pick up the duplicate book that you've already completed.

Turn to the same page and quickly look at the words corresponding to that number on the left-hand page while saying, 'Here's what you're going to do, you're going to pick a page. Are you left- or right-handed?' You need him to land on the left-hand page. If he indicates right-handed, say, 'Perfect, eliminate the right page.' If he indicates left-handed, say 'Perfect, we'll use the left page.' Throughout this conversation, you peek the words that match the clues.

7. Hear the clue.

Tell your volunteer to look at the page and then you turn to the back of your copy and say, 'Go ahead and focus on that clue of your choice now. What was it again, sir – 37? Just look at your page and pick across or down and try to figure it out for yourself. But if for some reason you can't, turn to the back for the answer.' Do this movement too, as if you're showing him how to do it. Say, 'It'll be bad enough if I can't get the word, but if you can't get it I'm in real trouble!' Then just close your book and toss it on to the table.

8. Reveal the answer.

After a suitable build-up, reveal that you know the answer even though you apparently don't know the clue. Get the audience to applaud him off stage.

Performing Extraordinary Feats and Stunts

Humans have always looked for ways to separate themselves from the pack. Perhaps owing to an innate need to be recognised, mentalists use trickery to create amazing 'feats', which look real enough to anyone watching but are far from it.



The following tricks all involve an element of risk in the preparation and performance. I recommend the consent of a parent or guardian for those under the age of 18 wishing to perform these tricks.

Walking on fire

When young, I remember seeing someone walk on fire and thinking how cool it was. Later I saw 'self help gurus' and others using it to help people develop confidence. In fact, many cultures use fire-walking as a rite of passage to demonstrate faith, and the practice goes as far back as 1200 BC in India. Fire-walking is a challenge and so needs to look and feel spectacular.

The Effect: You walk across a 1-metre x 4-metre (3-foot x 12-foot) bed of red-hot coals without suffering burns.

The Secret: You prepare the bed of coals in such a way that the laws of nature do all the work for you. Provided you walk gently and without haste, you can do so without being injured.



If you fail to heed all the warnings I give in this section and don't set things up properly, you can be burned. After all, fire is fire and human flesh isn't fire-proof. It's a good idea to have a team of people to help you out in the preparation stages, but nobody should assist you in walking on the fire. It's definitely worth having a safety person ready to pull you off of the coals should that be required, though.

What You Need: You need to find the right location (you can't just do a fire-walk in your local neighbourhood). Make sure that you consult with the local authorities and follow all applicable laws.



You also need the right wood. You can use hardwoods, such as cedar, oak, maple, cherry and ash; they produce good coals and smoke.

Don't use pine or evergreens because they don't burn as evenly as dry hardwoods and the sap can stick on your feet and cause you injury.

Whatever wood you choose, ensure that it's well dried and free of nails and any other hazards that can hurt your feet. As a rough guide, to do a 4- to 7-metre (12- to 21-foot) long walk, you need about 2 cubic metres (70 cubic feet) of wood. Cut the logs so that they're all about the same size: into lengths of about 30 centimetres (1 foot) long and about 7.5 centimetres (3 inches) square. You have some room for variation, but the same size wood burns at roughly the same speed and produces about the same amount of embers. Making sure that all the wood burns evenly is important to prevent areas of coal burning at different temperatures.

Set up everything long before dark, but don't light the fire until the sun goes down. Then prepare as follows:

1. Build the wood.

Starting at the top of the walk lay two parallel lines of logs end to end until you reach the bottom. In the middle between the two lines, place bunched up newspaper. Then place another layer of logs on top of the first layer, stacked cross ways across the entire length. Separate them by about 25 centimetres (10 inches).

Place a second set of lines running the length of the walk just like the first set, using the cross beams as support. Repeat the process until you have four layers of logs running long ways and three layers of cross logs in between them. A bit of trial and error is fine but you get the basic design. In between the spaces, place smaller pieces of scrap wood and you're ready to go.

2. Light the wall of wood.

Make the lighting a dramatic moment. I pour a line of barbeque lighter fluid along the top of the walk, down one side and back up the other. When I light it with a torch, the flames shoot across the whole bed and look fantastic. This kind of theatre really excites the audience.

Go along the walk and insert the torch into the cracks (a great photo opportunity!). You can expect the wood to burn for about two hours or so before it breaks down into coals. But you still have quite a bit of work left to do.

3. Arrange the wood.

Move any larger logs into the centre with rakes or shovels: that way they finish burning and breaking down. Look for any larger pieces that haven't broken down and pull them over to the side-edge facing the audience and line them along the walk. This creates a visual illusion that things are much larger and more dangerous than they really are.

When you've made sure that all the larger pieces are moved or broken up, use a rake to move the larger pieces to the side facing the audience. On the opposite side, rake out any spaces or hollows. Use a shovel to smash down the entire length of the walk from left to right, so only small round coals remain: don't fan them or try to make them look hotter. You're not trying to stoke the flames at this point, but to reduce your chances of injury.

You want all the bigger leftover pieces up against the side edge where everyone's sitting taking in the spectacle.

4. Do the fire-walk.

At this point, the coal bed is ready, even if you're not. Take off your shoes and socks, roll up your trouser legs and take a deep breath. Then walk with purpose to the other end.





Don't rush or run or you may fall over into the coals: not the ending you're looking for! When you've started, commit to it and go for it. Don't hesitate or stand there. The longer you're in the heat, the more your chance of getting hurt increases.



Anyone near is sure to feel the heat, so make sure that the audience is in a safe place and people can't get too close. You're responsible for making things as safe as possible, so don't take that detail lightly. If possible, arrange for some firefighters and paramedics to be present.

Appearing to be impervious to a flame

The Effect: You roll up your sleeves and pass a blowtorch across your forearm without being burned.

The Secret: To perform this trick, you gimmick a blowtorch so that it's starved of oxygen.

What You Need: A plumber's torch from a local hardware shop, a canister of propane and a roll of thick 2.5-centimetre (1-inch) wide metal tape.

You can use just about any make of torch as long as it has holes that you can cover up.

The Setup: Take out your torch and look at the piece that connects to the fuel canister. It has a flow knob on it and, not too far from where the flame comes out, a section with holes in it.



You must completely cover these holes so that no air can get through. By doing so, you starve the flame when the torch is lit, which greatly reduces its temperature. Then you can pass the flame over your arm without being burned so long as you do so quickly and not too close (just like when you run your hand over the top of a lighter or candle flame; you're fine so long as you don't let the flame sit in one spot).



If you do accidentally burn yourself, never put butter or anything not made specifically for treating burns on the burn itself. Run it under cold water immediately and then place a burn ointment and loose bandage on it. If it's blistered, seek medical assistance.

Test the flame with an infrared thermometer before you tape off the vent holes and then again afterwards. The difference in temperature is surprising.



The Performance: This trick is commonly used as part of hypnotism routines (check out Chapter 12) to convince the audience that it's experiencing an altered mental state.

This trick is an excellent convincer; use it in a performance as a dramatic flourish.

Chilling out to the extreme: Being frozen alive

David Blaine is well known as an endurance artist, in addition to being a magician. But long before he decided to be entombed in ice in New York City for a television programme, industrious performers such as Harry Houdini and the great Henry Valleau had already cracked the code on how to be 'frozen alive' without losing your life in the process.

The Effect: You're encased or entombed in a coffin of ice for a couple hours and live to tell the tale.

What You Need: Blocks of ice – and lots of them. One of the endearing qualities of this trick is that it's relatively inexpensive to create. After all, the prop is just frozen water, which can be cut and shaped easily. As long as you can get the ice delivered, you're good to go.



Source ice from an industrial supplier who can bring you as much as you want and drop it off, too. This ice is the same that fishmongers use, for example, in open markets.

Being frozen on a table

You can perform this illusion outside on grass or on a table. I have my own workshop and access to all sorts of equipment, so I made my own table using tubular steel. Steel isn't that expensive, but having it cut and fabricated into custom-made items can be pretty dear, which is why I always suggest investing in tools and discovering how to make your own props.

Whether you make your own table or not, it needs to have an open grating to allow the water to drip

through. I prefer to perform this illusion outside so that I don't have to worry about where the water goes, but if you're performing it on stage or in a studio, you need to plan for the water run-off to avoid creating an unsafe environment. When you're using a table, make sure you have some kind of supports or rails to make sure that the ice can't fall in on top of you.

As well as the ice, you also need to invest in an ultra thin neoprene suit, like those used by divers. You can easily hide it under your clothing. Also purchase some clingfilm from an industrial shipping supply company, and if you want to spice up the performance, get a medical heart monitor and some blue makeup.

The Performance: You need at least two or three people to help you who can work quickly to construct the props and then assist you throughout the performance. Make sure that you work with people you can trust, and go through all of the performance details with them before you move forward, as follows:

1. Build the ice coffin.

To construct the coffin, place the ice blocks on the floor, bed or table to create the base layer. Think of this process like creating an igloo, which is relevant to this stunt because in fact you stay quite warm in an igloo. Then build up the layers on the sides, foot area and around the head. Leave the side facing the audience open until you get inside.

2. Wrap up.

You need to be wrapped from your feet to your shoulders in the plastic clingfilm to protect you from melting ice. The less contact you have with the freezing water, the better.

Present the wrapping as though you're trying to ensure that you can't move.

When you're wrapped up, get your assistants to lift you and put you inside the coffin. Place a small folded white flannel under the back of your head to keep it off the ice, too.

3. Seal the ice coffin.

Now that you're in, your assistants complete the last side of the coffin. Make sure that they place a frame around you to keep you safe.

This frame can be built in a variety of ways. You can have one made in wood or steel or you can use 2 x 4 boards.

You can pour crushed ice around you as an added convincer. Although it looks as though the ice falls right on you your assistants can move it to the side while pretending to cover you in it.

The final step in building your coffin is laying bricks of ice across the top of the frame and ice walls to seal you in and, apparently, lower the temperature even further.

4. Chill out in the ice coffin.

You can stay in the coffin for up to two hours, perhaps longer.



TIP



INSIDER INFORMATION



REMEMBER

Part of the performance is getting your assistants to monitor you with a hand-held infrared thermometer. The thermometer both takes readings and records them. Take a reading from the ice when it's delivered; it will be sub-zero. When you take the temperature 'inside' the coffin to display to the audience, simply use the record of this earlier reading. An assistant can simply miscall the temperature too, which also works fine.

Most of the performers I know also monitor their pulse and blood pressure as part of the performance. To make them seem increasingly erratic, just interrupt the blood flow by cutting off the circulation at your brachial artery, at the top of your arm, much like a nurse does when she takes your blood pressure.



One of the signs of hypothermia is cyanosis, which is a bluing around the mouth, nose and fingertips. Therefore, as you progressively get 'colder', get an assistant to secretly wipe blue makeup around your lips. As a further convincer ask him to place bottles of water next to you in the coffin. The water bottles will later be shown to be completely frozen as a further convincer, because they're taken directly from a freezer after being chilled. An assistant simply has to tap them against each other and the motion causes them to almost instantly turn to ice. While performing a stunt like this may be incredibly boring for you, it's not for your audience.

5. Be released.

At the appropriate moment, get your assistants to start breaking into your ice coffin. The amount of time you stay in the ice is in part dictated by the outside temperature of the performance venue and not on your ability to handle the cold.



Obviously, performing this illusion outside in a hot climate isn't nearly as convincing.

To get you out, your assistants cut open the clingfilm wrapping using a safety or rescue knife, which has a hook-type blade designed to catch on things like seat belts. Then they 'gently' unfold your arms and help you begin moving again. They create the illusion that you're frozen and every movement is painful. Feel free to wince and grimace as this process takes place. You can 'come back to life' if you like, too. Just sort of 'gasp' and then act a little dazed and confused. Your helpers assist you out of the coffin, wrap you in a blanket and help you limp off stage. Mission accomplished.

Getting needled . . . through your skin

Throughout history, people have reported occurrences of self or spontaneous healing that seem to defy everything known about human physiology. By

using a little trickery, and a clever gimmick that you can make yourself, you can prove to the world that you too have the ability to control your body.

The Effect: You pierce the skin of your forearm with an oversized needle, and it starts to bleed in front of everyone. Then, through the power of your mind, you heal the wound, leaving no trace of the injury.

The Secret: Variations of this illusion have been around for a long time. Of course, you don't put the needle through your skin but use rubber cement to create a fold of skin to push it through; the needle never really penetrates your skin at all. The blood is pumped through the centre of the needle and is (you'll be glad to know!) fake.

The Setup: From a hobby or hardware shop you need a length of aluminium tubing no larger than 5 millimetres ($\frac{1}{16}$ th of an inch) in diameter and 20 centimetres (8 inches) long, a small rubber bulb that fits on the end and some rubber cement. From a magic shop you need some fake blood. You can use stainless steel tubing if you prefer, so long as it's very small and resembles the body of a needle. The opening of the bulb needs to fit tightly on the tube, so make sure that you test it.

Follow these steps:

1. Make a fake needle.

Grind or cut off the end of the tubing at an angle so that the tip is the same shape as the end of a hypodermic needle; be careful because it's then sharp. Use sandpaper or a fine grinding wheel to clean up the edges so that no burrs remain and the tip is dulled.

Even when you slightly blunt the end of the tube, it can easily penetrate your skin and cause serious injury.

Fill the end that you just cut with clear epoxy and let it dry. Remove any excess glue.

2. Set up the blood.

On the side of the tube, somewhere around the middle, drill a small 1.5-millimetre ($\frac{1}{16}$ th-inch) hole. You probably need to place the tube in a small vice to hold it in place. Fill the small rubber bulb with fake blood, connect it to the end of the 'needle' and pump the blood down the tube until you get some coming out of the side hole. Repeat this process until the tube is full. Now when you squeeze the bulb at the right time blood will appear to flow from your arm.

3. Set up the 'needle' on your arm.

Brush a small amount of rubber cement on your left forearm and let it dry. This adhesive is designed to stick to itself, so if you push the sides of your skin together it creates a channel, and when you push the needle



through it appears to penetrate your flesh. Don't show the needle side of your arm statically; move your arm gently and show the front and back so that the needle appears to go through your skin. If you linger, the audience may be able to see the fold.

Turn your arm away from the audience, lay the needle on it, fold the skin over the needle and then push it through. (Hold the needle in your hand as though it's a large hat pin.) Now squeeze the rubber bulb at the end of the needle to make blood come out of the tubing. Make sure some blood appears at the top and bottom openings of the folded skin so that you appear to be injured. Don't worry about anyone seeing; it's very easy to secretly squeeze the bulb while it's in your hand.

Like so much in mentalism, the rest is up to you and how you perform this illusion.

4. Clean up.

Turn your arm away again and pull the needle out. Rub the arm to separate the glue. At that point, all is back to normal. Ham it up a bit, look at where the wound should be and so on.

Come fly with me: Lifting a person in the air

The illusion of lifting someone in the air is over 100 years old and was used by strong men during the days of Vaudeville and travelling shows in America and Europe.

The Effect: You lift, from the ground, a chair with a person sitting in it. To the audience, you appear to lift the person up.

The Secret: This trick is remarkably easy to perform but looks pretty astounding. If you try to pull a chair away from someone who's leaning back in it, he'll freak out and try to sit back down. This rick is based on the same concept. Because you have to move the chair with some weight in it, you need a strong one with a low back and a low seat with a cross-bar between the back legs.

The Performance: Ask your volunteer to sit down and relax. His legs need to be outstretched and slightly bent and his arms must rest on the sides with his hands gripping tightly.

You need to get close up to the back of the chair with your right leg leveraged against it so that you can push the chair forward.

This trick involves very definite movements, as follows:

1. Grab the back of the chair firmly and swiftly push it forward.

This movement raises the back legs and forces the person to his feet.

2. Pull the back of the chair back immediately so that you create a fulcrum at the point where the cross-bar makes contact with your leg.

This step ensures that the front legs of the chair leave the ground and the front of the seat makes contact with the person's backside, forcing him to fall backwards into a sitting posture, while you simultaneously remove your leg and pull the chair backwards.

Your volunteer's feet leave the ground as he falls backwards, and the speed of the action creates the illusion that you lifted both him and the chair in the air.



Be careful – if you're too forceful or if you pull the chair away, you can dislodge your volunteer from the chair and he'll fall to the ground.

Controlling the Weather: Cloud Bursting

In the film *The Men Who Stare at Goats*, George Clooney's character is a psychic soldier in a secret US Army programme. In one scene, he looks up at the sky and claims to 'bust' a cloud with his mind. In other words, he's supposedly using telekinetic powers to disperse a cloud. Of course, you can't do that but with a little practice you can pretend to.

Cloud bursting isn't something that you can do on command, despite what you may hear from people claiming to have paranormal abilities. This trick is all about timing and allowing nature to do what it normally does with or without your presence. You simply capitalise on this reality and use it to your advantage to perform a 'miracle'. To perform this illusion, you do absolutely nothing other than pretend to be doing it.



Relatively low wind with cumulus clouds in an otherwise clear blue sky is the ideal weather condition for this trick. Start with smaller, lower clouds because they're easier to 'disperse' given their size relative to wind speeds at that altitude.



The key is to focus on a cloud that's going to disperse naturally, which starts to look more translucent than others. Cumulus clouds are big, puffy and round and resemble cotton wool balls floating in the sky. You need to choose a cloud with slightly more jagged edges, which are thinning. Choose clouds that have been separated from larger groups.

Like so many psychics, you have to look for the opportunity to do this trick and then take credit for something you didn't even do. This illusion is entirely about the performance and not about any method or technique.

From a performance standpoint, all you have to do is identify a cloud that you believe is starting to break apart naturally and then get your audience to focus on it with you. You can strike a 'psychic pose' if you like, such as putting your hand near your temple, or just appear to be concentrating. Put on your acting hat and ham it up in line with your character (flip to Chapter 2 to find out know more about creating a performing persona). And be your biggest fan: tell your audience 'Did you see that? The only cloud I focused on was the only one to disappear.'



A friend of mine pretends to be entirely 'drained' of energy when the cloud finally bursts, as if he's just completely used up his powers.

Chapter 16

Creating Spectator Failures

In This Chapter

- ▶ Perfecting your performance patter
- ▶ Using mentalism to demonstrate your super-human abilities
- ▶ Mastering spectator classics – old and new

Appearing to remove or reduce another person's – or even a whole crowd's – strength or ability to do something is a common mentalist theme. Some of the best examples of these phenomena go back to people such as Lulu Hurst, Annie May Abbott and Sherlock Holmes martial arts pioneer E. W. Barton-Wright.

In this chapter, I show you how to perform mind-boggling spectator classics from more than 100 years ago, along with some modern variations that are sure to drive your audience wild! From creating the right atmosphere by using performance patter to the specifics of each trick, this chapter is guaranteed to have your spectators eating out of the palm of your hand.



The actual strength of the person you're working with is irrelevant to your success when performing the power-increasing or strength-removing tricks in this chapter. Always try to select a strong-looking male 'volunteer' to help you out for the simple reason that such illusions are much more impressive when performed with a powerful-looking assistant.

Pinning Down Your Patter

In this section, I talk about the *patter*, or verbal presentation, that often accompanies the kinds of shopping mall and psychic fair demonstrations that I cover in this chapter. I can think of no better example of great manipulative patter than Australian Richard Saunders's hilarious and enlightening podcast. As a sceptic, he poignantly illustrates how simply anyone can 'invent a new science' by throwing scientific-sounding words into a hat and drawing them out at random. In this case, the words include *healing*, *magnetic*, *balance*, *quantum*, *vibrations*, *energy*, *harmonic* and *oscillation*. Out of the hat came

three words, which when combined created the fake science of 'Harmonic Energy Oscillation'.

The best part, though, is the pure malarkey that Sanders conjures up to explain this new phenomenon, which goes something like this:

Finally, the time has come to reveal to the world the amazing healing science of the ancient science of Harmonic Energy Oscillation. Lost for thousands of years but now, thanks to recent discoveries in the Amazon, this wonder of nature can be yours for the incredibly low price of only \$599. Embedded deep within this pendant are harmonic energies that oscillate in tune with your unique bio-field – giving you more balance, energy, strength and well-being.



Re-read the patter and you can see that it's designed to lull the gullible into a false sense of security regarding the product's validity; inspired by false claims of its marvellous qualities, they're willing to pay for something that isn't actually legitimate. As a mentalist, however, the quote is a perfect example of how easily you can develop hard-hitting, dynamic and convincing patter that resonates with the audience for whom you're performing.

Taking Control: Power-Zapping Your Audience

Power-zapping tricks fall somewhere in-between meditation, martial arts and hypnotism. Well, they're sort of similar to the powers and claims generated by these 'fields'. Your goal is to create a situation whereby, at your command, a person who should have the strength to do something – can't. In this section, I talk you through some simple techniques that involve the seemingly astonishing removal of your volunteer's strength and ability.

Trying out 'the un-tearable paper'

The Effect: You ask a member of the audience to come up on stage and then give him a piece of paper. Then you hypnotise him and remove his ability to tear it.

The Secret: You use non-tearable paper, which you can order from most stationery shops. I purchase mine from a company in Mumbai, India; it looks virtually identical to regular paper – and it's cheap.



I know a stage performer who cuts up pieces of non-tearable white shipping bags and uses them during a hypnotism routine.

The Performance: I like to throw in this trick during a hypnotism session. (Chapter 12 covers everything you need to know about hypnosis routines.)

Follow these steps:

1. **Approach one of the people helping you out who seems more suggestible than others.**



Refer to Chapter 12 for tips on assessing how suggestible people are.

If possible, choose a person who looks very strong because they'll be a more impressive sight when they can't tear the paper.

2. **Induce your subject into a relaxed state.**

For step-by-step instructions on how to do so, flick to Chapter 12.

3. **Implant the idea in your volunteer's mind that he won't be able to tear the piece of paper.**

You do so by pretending to hypnotise him or via some other technique that creates the impression you've taken over his mind and physical abilities.

4. **Instruct your volunteer to tear the piece of paper.**

And just watch him try! Of course, he's unable to do so and watching him struggle is bound impress the audience.

Making yourself un-liftable

Mentalists all over the world perform this illusion, which dates back to the 'Georgia Wonder', Miss Lulu Hurst. At the age of 15, Hurst's amazing strength-zapping feats on stage made her one of the most famous women in America. She baffled college professors, doctors and even scientific investigators, and yet everything she did can be explained by physics.

The Effect: You ask a volunteer from the audience to demonstrate his strength by lifting you up.



Selecting an audience member who's larger than you and appears physically fit ensures that the person easily lifts you up.

With your skills of mentalism, you can then completely remove your volunteer's strength so when asked to lift you again, he's no longer able to. As hard as he tries, he just can't manage it. Snap your fingers and he can lift you again!

The Secret: To prevent someone from being able to lift you up, you just need to master the correct positioning of your elbows. Through a very discreet shift in posture, this altered position makes lifting you almost impossible.

The Performance: Choose a strong-looking volunteer from the audience and invite him on stage. Then follow these steps:

1. Get him to stand directly in front of you.

Make a bit of a show about his size and invite the audience to marvel at his physical prowess.

2. Ask him to lift you up.

As he does so, hold your elbows tightly against your sides with your hands pointing toward your shoulders. In this position your volunteer can lift you without problem so long as he uses the elbows. After a suitable build-up and some convincing patter, though, that's going to end!



3. Ask the volunteer to place you back on the ground.

Now demonstrate your amazing power-zapping mentalism by pretending to stare in his eyes and then snapping your fingers and saying, 'Okay. You won't be able to lift me.'

4. Ask him to lift you again.

This time, shift your body backward and let your arms outstretch a little against his arms. Because he's no longer positioned perpendicular to you, he doesn't have any leverage and would need to be the Hulk to pick you up.



If you feel any signs that your volunteer is succeeding in picking you up, immediately relax your shoulders and arms, which makes picking you up harder because he's lifting against something that gives way.

5. Wait for your volunteer to become resigned to the fact that he's just not going to be able to budge you.

End the trick by thanking him for his time.

Mastering the 'magnetic box'

This illusion is a classic in the mentalism world. It was invented in the mid-1800s by Jean-Eugene Robert Houdin (after whom Erik Weiss took the stage name Harry Houdini).

The Effect: You ask a volunteer to join you on stage.

You display a small box with a handle on it that you're able to easily pick up and move around. You place it on the floor and proceed to use your mystical abilities to diminish your volunteer's strength. When he's instructed to pick up the box, he can't. In fact, he's unable to budge it even an inch. Then, you restore his strength and he's able to pick it up immediately.

The Secret: The box is held down by a strong electromagnet hidden under the stage.

Disturbing the Balance: Using Applied Kinesiology

Applied kinesiology is a method of muscle testing used by doctors to determine how a person's body is functioning. Alternative medicine practitioners use the method to diagnosis ailments and plan courses of treatment for patients.

Introducing the ideomotor effect

The *ideomotor effect* refers to the influence of suggestion or expectation on a person's unconscious involuntary behaviour.

Ouija® boards work and 'spirits' move tables despite the presence of only a few fingertips touching their surfaces because people's brains influence their bodies. Mentalists use this knowledge to create all manner of illusions.

Believing is halfway to achieving

If your mind believes something, it can often achieve it. The brain is a powerful instrument capable of incredible things (check out the nearby sidebar 'Using mind over matter'). For example, people can take a placebo and experience the exact outcome that they were told to expect even though the pill contains no active ingredients whatsoever.

This reality is also why hypnotism, at least from the perspective of a mentalist who practises it, works so effectively during performances.

Using mind over matter

When I was growing up I saw an incredible example of the power of the mind. A power lifter was trying to beat his personal record, but he wasn't able to do so. Finally, after many failed lifts, his coach, in an attempt to alter his mindset, lied to him and said that the weight he was

about to lift was the same as he was used to lifting in training. In fact, his trainer had increased the weight on the bar to more than he'd ever lifted before.

Astonishingly, he then raised the bar clean over his head!

The Effect: The tests in this section are designed to convince a subject that you can sap or take away his strength by mystical means – be it through hypnosis or the wearing of an amulet, for example. While the tests are different from one another, they're all used by charlatans for the same reason.

The Secret: You're not putting anything more than physics to the test – not a person's health or bio-magnetic-oscillating-harmonic-resonance or anything else. The secret is simply where you direct force.

Strong-arming for the 'T' arm test

The Performance: Instruct your subject to stand on his right foot and place his arms out horizontally to his sides. With both of your hands together, come up and apply pressure just above the elbow joint. When you push downward, be sure to push diagonally out away from the left leg at the same time. You can easily knock him off balance. Make sure that you instruct the subject to resist you as best he can.

To reinstate his strength and balance, you need do nothing more than apply downward and inward pressure toward his left leg. It's as simple as that. As a mentalist, I'm sure that you can already see the usefulness of this kind of test, and how it can be used in a performance. Hypnotism is obviously an effective way to remove someone's power (turn to Chapter 12 for details of how to do it).

Getting down with the push-down test

The Performance: Get your subject to stand with his feet together, toes facing directly ahead. Instruct him to put his arms to his sides, then turn his right hand outward and cup it so that you can put your fist in it. When you apply force down and out to his right diagonally away from his centre of gravity, he'll lose his balance. To restore it, you just apply downward force toward him a bit. Remarkably, and fortunately for your mentalism performance, when you push *toward* your volunteer's centre of gravity you can apply a lot more force and thus make a big show of demonstrating his newly restored balance.

Flexing your muscles for the flexibility test

The Performance: Get your subject to face forward and put his right arm out parallel to the ground with his thumb up in the air as if hitching. Instruct him to twist at the waist to the right until he cannot go any farther.



Quacks give the person whatever device or magic charm they're flogging at this point and then ask him to perform the movement again, exactly as before. The outcome is physiological in nature, though, rather than magical: the body is simply able to stretch more than before. It's all in the muscles, not in the bio-magnetic-oscillating-harmonic-resonance device actually made of rubber and plastic.

Sussing Out Some Spectator Classics

At the turn of the twentieth century, an abundance of mentalism routines appeared based on defying what people understood about the laws of nature. One person came up with a trick and immediately everyone else copied it. That's how it always is. Typical copy cat!

In this section, I include what I consider to be some of the most simple but impressive illusions devised over the centuries. I condense these classics and leave space for you to make them your own and have fun fascinating your spectators with them.

Commanding with your fingertips

The Effect: You instruct a volunteer to hold a chair in his arms with the back legs resting against his chest and his hands grasping the tips of the front legs in each hand. You then take away his strength with your super-human ability and can push him around the stage as you please, with nothing but your two fingers.

The Secret: The secret lies in physics. You stand in front of him and place one finger on a back leg of the chair and one on the opposite front leg, close under the seat. These points give you considerable leverage and allow you to sway your volunteer forward or backward, from side to side, or wherever you like! You can literally push him anywhere around the stage. He can try to resist, but he's under your spell!



When you're demonstrating this trick, just watch his face: if he seems as though he's going to push you, use that force and gently pull him back toward you. If you think he's going to try to pull the chair, give it to him by allowing the force to go toward him (without letting the chair leave your hands, of course).

Stripping subjects of their strength

The Effect: You ask a volunteer to try to pull a chair from your hands, but no matter how hard he tries, he can't.

The Secret: The chair is held with the front legs against the chest and the seat just under the chin. Your hands grasp the back legs at the very bottom. From this position, if you put your palms against either side of the back of the chair, he can't pull it out of your hands.



The key to this trick is having your hands up high and pushed down a bit to bend your helper's back. Your hand position is designed to look like you're lightly holding the sides, but you want the meaty area of your thumbs to push against the back to keep the chair firmly planted in his chest.

Becoming the electric mentalist

The Effect: You show that you can prevent someone from being able to lift you by simply flicking on an internal electricity switch.

The Secret: You place one finger on your helper's temple and another on the nerve that runs along the side of his neck. You do this action under the guise of connecting an electric circuit, but in reality you use these points to create enough discomfort that the person trying to lift you has to move backward thereby changing his positioning so that he now can't lift you.



If you can keep a person at arm's length, he can never develop enough leverage to lift you, whatever his strength. The average person can hold only about 34 kilograms (75 pounds) in outstretched arms. So assuming that you weigh more than that, you're not going anywhere at all.

Demonstrating super-human strength

The Effect: While standing very close to and facing a wall, you use your 'power' to eliminate the strength of multiple volunteers who are shown to be unable to push you against the wall.

The Secret: Simply place your hands flat on the wall and tighten your wrists entirely so you're locked in place from the shoulders down to the arms and finally into the wrists. Don't make a show of it; just do it. You can have up to four people pushing you together and you don't budge.



The key is to make sure that you have the weakest person in the bunch behind your shoulders. Of course, there's no way to be 100 per cent certain of a person's strength but you can generally tell who's physically stronger than the next person. Larger people should be at the very back and thinner or smaller people nearest you.

Chapter 17

Supernatural Spectacles: Uncovering the Art of Spirit Theatre

In This Chapter

- ▶ Doing hoodoo and voodoo
 - ▶ Helping 'spirits' find a chosen card
 - ▶ Spooking an audience with a haunted deck of cards
 - ▶ Conducting a séance
-

Ghosts, spirits and ectoplasm! Oh my!

In a book on mentalism, I can't possibly leave out the wonderfully bizarre world of *spirit theatre*: the presentation of supernatural phenomena accomplished through trickery in which a practitioner apparently communicates with spirits in the afterlife.



Whenever you're dealing with the afterlife, many people tend automatically to want what you're doing to be real – *even* when you say that it isn't. This situation is quite different to traditional visual magic in which the audience views the magician as an entertaining trickster and quite happily sees the performance as nothing more than a puzzle or challenge that needs to be solved.

Therefore, as the performer, you need to display sensitivity in this area and make clear that what you're doing is for entertainment only: be aware of the possible difference in audience expectation and embrace it (see Chapter 2). That said, I still try to make the presentation as eerie and creepy as humanly possible. Carefully crafted patter comes into play here; mentalism is all about the words you use and how you build the story connected to the trick that you're sharing with an audience.

In this chapter, I explore the admittedly odd but altogether fascinating subject of spirit theatre and provide sure-fire ways for you to perform the illusion of communicating with the dead. I also explain how you can produce truly spooky effects through drama, dialogue and discretion and so scare the living daylights out of people (all in the name of having a good time, of course)!

Unveiling Voodoo Ashes

Voodoo is an eclectic syncretic religious system that originated in Haiti and is often characterised by or associated with Satanism and the occult in films, the media and popular culture. As such, this little baby is sure to keep people up at night wondering how you did it and if you somehow summoned black magic to make it happen. The reaction this trick provokes is often so great that you'd think the audience had just seen a zombie walk right in front of them, attack you and eat your brain!

Spreading the voodoo ashes secret

The Effect: You put some ash on the back of a person's hand. When you gently rub it, the ash disappears only to be found on the inside of the person's palm.

The Secret: The secret is pretty simple – you put some ash on the inside of the person's hand *before* you start your performance.

Preparing to ash-tonish and amaze

For this trick, you need an ashtray with some ash in it and that's pretty much it. Dab a little on your left middle finger, and approach the person you're going to perform for.

Adding a touch of voodoo to your performance

Your ash is in place and all you need to know is how to use it. Follow these steps:

1. Find someone to help you out.

Anyone can help you with this trick, in just about any setting. Approach someone and say, 'I'd love to show you something pretty exciting. Do you believe in angels and demons, spirits and ghosts?' Chances are that the person says he does, but even if he doesn't, that's okay – just say that you didn't before either.

2. Capture your audience's imagination.



As for any trick, presentation is key. This trick is designed to be spooky so making a connection to other things, such as voodoo or the occult, is a great way to play on an audience's fears and other notions to get them emotionally involved. Really play up the dialogue with this one; if presented properly, you can start to freak out the person long before you do any tricks!

I usually tell a story to introduce the audience to the concept of voodoo. I say, 'When I was younger, I found out that my schoolfriend's auntie was a voodoo priestess from Haiti. I went to his house after school one day and accidentally walked into her room when I was looking for the loo; it really scared me. She had a shrine, covered in all sorts of weird stuff – candles, a cross, some bones, a bottle of rum, a burning cigar – and then suddenly, she confronted me and asked me what I was doing.'

Continue with, 'Of course, I almost couldn't speak. Her demeanour was harsh at first, but when she saw I was really afraid, she said, "Don't be scared child; ain't nothin' in here gonna harm you".'

3. Put the ash on your volunteer's palm, without being noticed.

Continue with your monologue: 'I started to run out of the room, but she grabbed my hands . . . it really startled me!'

- Motion for your volunteer to bring his hands up to about waist height.
- Grab your volunteer's hands. I almost jerk them as if I were the voodoo priestess reaching out so that the performance conjures up a connection to the story through physical contact.

When you grab the hands of your volunteer, make sure that your thumbs are on top of his hands, with your fingers gently touching the insides of his palms – this is when the ash from your right middle finger is transferred into his left palm.

- As you touch his palms say, 'Here, bring them up a little higher.' Raise his hands up a bit –this serves no purpose other than misdirection and to keep his mind off what you're really doing. Say, 'Go ahead and close your fists now.' When he does so, continue your story with, 'Then she reached over and picked up the cigar that was burning in the ashtray on the altar.'



'She said to me, "No, no child; you can't leave yet. You've disturbed my shrine and the voodoo god *Dinclinsin*; he's got a very nasty temper. I was just about to do a ritual to make him leave because he's been interfering with some of my friend's lives. I have to make sure you're not going to be haunted by him – so I need to give you a *voodoo mark*." I thought for sure she was going to burn me or something when she said that.'

- Reach over and slide the ashtray towards you. Look your volunteer squarely in the eyes and say, 'Which hand is your writing hand?' It doesn't matter which one he says, because you're going to force his left hand – the one with the ash already in it – to be your focus.

If he says he's right-handed, say, 'Okay, then, let's use your left hand; if this goes wrong, I wouldn't want you to not be able to write anymore.'

If he says he's left-handed, say, 'Okay, let's use that hand then.'

For more info on the magician's force, check out Chapter 5.

- Gently push your volunteer's right hand down and tell him to relax it against his side.



A big part of mentalism is connecting with people and making your performance resonate with them. Silence makes people uncomfortable and brings emotion to the surface. It gives them time to think about and reflect on what's going on. It also allows their imagination to kick in. During this trick I like to say the first line and then simply stare at my volunteer's eyes for five seconds. Most people find this seriously unsettling, which adds to the creepy disconcerting atmosphere you're trying to create! Staring at someone and not saying anything at all, even when you yourself feel compelled to talk, makes the person want to talk or do something – anything except be there right that moment!

4. Put the ash on the back of your volunteer's hand in full view of the audience.

Pinch a little ash between your right index finger, middle finger and thumb, and put it on top of his outstretched left hand. Notice that if any leftover ash was on your middle finger, it no longer matters because you just touched the ash in front of him.



Your volunteer had no idea the ash was even going to come into play, which is why you never tell anyone what you're going to do in advance – you just do it. You don't repeat tricks for the same reason: if people know what to expect, they watch out for how it happens. Secrets are easily revealed by poor performances and then the magic itself is gone. By not mentioning the ash, it surprises your volunteer and produces a moment of astonishment that can only be created that way.

Continue with your story while rubbing the ash onto the back of your volunteer's hand. 'My friend's auntie put ash on my hand just like this . . . and rubbed it in until it was gone. At first, when it disappeared, I thought, "Well, that's a strange thing to do", but then she told me I had the 'voodoo mark' now. I kept looking at my hand – closer, but I didn't see anything. Do you see anything?' Your volunteer's definitely going to look at his hand. Give him a moment. Of course, there's nothing there, which is the point – because you're going to reveal the magic in a moment.

5. Reveal the voodoo mark.

Say to your volunteer, 'I know, at first I couldn't see mine either. I thought this woman was crazy. I remember looking at this old priestess and thinking, "Wow, she's bonkers!" She could tell I didn't believe her and she said to me, "You don't believe child; I can see that in your eyes. But it's real enough. Open your hand."'

The moment you say 'open your hand' pause and stare at your volunteer. An uncontrollable urge to open his own hand will come over him. Trust me on that. Just stare. Don't say a word. If for some reason he doesn't open his hand, motion with your head and eyes. When he looks inside, he sees the 'voodoo mark', and I guarantee he's never going to forget you – ever!

Working the Spirit Slates

Spirit slates are staple props used by mediums, spiritualists, mentalists and magicians as part of séances since the early nineteenth century. Essentially, they're a set of small chalkboards, which children used for doing schoolwork before the advent of paper notebooks and laptop computers. These seemingly harmless devices come in a variety of sizes, but all look roughly the same and serve one singular purpose in the art of spirit theatre: to create the illusion that ethereal forces are communicating to an audience from beyond the grave – via a piece of chalk. I've always wondered why they don't just call on people's mobiles, though; doesn't that seem more practical?

Sussing out the slate routine

The Effect: You show two ordinary wooden-framed slates to the audience and demonstrate that they're blank on both sides. You place a piece of chalk between the slates, put a rubber band around them and place them to the side. You toss a rubber-banded deck of cards to the audience and then instruct the person who catches it to choose a card, memorise it and toss the

deck back. Ask him to announce the identity of the card so that the rest of the audience can hear it; it's the ace of spades.

You hold the slates aloft in one hand (remember that they're already bound and have been sitting in plain view the whole time) and call on the spirits to send a message. The audience hears the spooky scratching of the chalk against the slates. When you unbind and display the slates, a message is indeed seen to be printed on the faces – scrawled across one is the word 'Ace' and on the other 'Spade'. It seems that the spirits were faithful. Like I said, it *seems*. . .

The Secret: Before performing, you write a message on one framed slate and on one side of a free-floating unframed slate known as a flap, which you made earlier (flip to the later section 'Making your own set of slates' to find out how). You place the flap writing side inward against the framed slate's face that also has writing on it – and hold it in place by pressure from your thumb. When you hold the boards aloft, they look untouched. But when you place them together and turn them upside down, the slate falls into place and exposes the writing. You need only pull the slates apart to show that you've experienced something supernatural. The scratching sound? Well, you do that with your fingernail on the board!

The big question is: how did you know in advance which card the person was going to pick when you threw the deck randomly into the audience; after all, he had a *free* choice, didn't he? Well, no he didn't – that's how! You forced the card on the audience member by using a one-way force deck. You simply play on the fact that he assumes all the cards are different. The deck is rubber-banded together tightly, and you tell him *exactly* how he has to choose a card (I explain how in 'Getting your slate trick props in place' later in this chapter).

Making your own set of slates

As with many mentalism tricks, you need to do some work ahead of time to make sure that your trick goes off without a hitch. Here I talk you through how to make your own set of slates as well as list everything else you require in order for your performance to run smoothly.

You can purchase spirit slate sets from magic shops and other speciality vendors, but I've always been partial to DIY projects. One of the easiest spirit slate gimmicks to make on your own is the 'flap slate', which has a flap that covers hidden writing.

To make your own set of spirit slates, you need:

- ✓ Three identical 7 x 10 (17.78cm x 25.4cm) slates
- ✓ A file or masonry saw

In this case, size only matters if you're on stage; otherwise you can use any size slate you want. You can pick up slates at hobby, art or educational supply shops. Alternatively, you can also perform a quick online search and get them delivered to your door.



Most slate frames are made of light-coloured wood. Consider staining them a darker colour to add a little character and create the impression that they're older (and more mysterious) than they really are.

Follow these steps to make your own set of spirit slates:

1. Remove the slates from their frames.

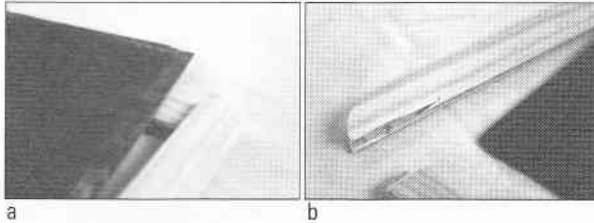
2. Locate one of the corners of the frame.

You'll see a small joint that has been glued. If you apply a little pressure it breaks.

3. Wiggle the frame until it comes off the slate.

4. Repeat Step 3 until all four sides have been removed (check out Figure 17-1, steps (a) and (b)).

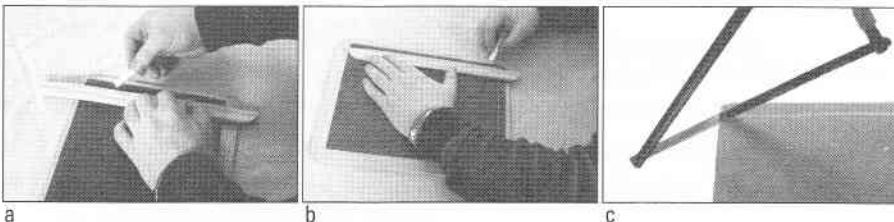
Figure 17-1:
Removing
the flap
slate, stages
(a) and (b).



5. Resize the slate.

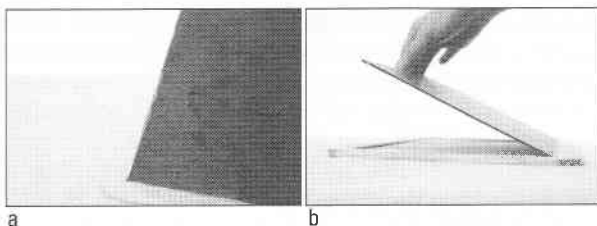
This loose slate (the *flap*) is used in your slate trick to hide prewritten messages by resting it on top of another framed slate. In order for it to fit inside the other frames, you need to measure the inside dimensions of the other two frames you plan to use (Figure 17-2, steps (a) and (b)), and then cut it to the right size (Figure 17-2, step (c)).

Figure 17-2:
Measuring
the slate,
stages
(a),
(b) and (c).



In my case, I remove about 6 millimetres ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) from all four edges using a masonry saw. The effect depends entirely on the flap fitting properly to hide the text before revealing it later – make sure you test it out first. (See Figure 17-3.)

Figure 17-3:
Fitting the
slate, stages
(a) and (b).



A little elbow grease and you have a basic set of spirit slates – as shown in Figure 17-4.

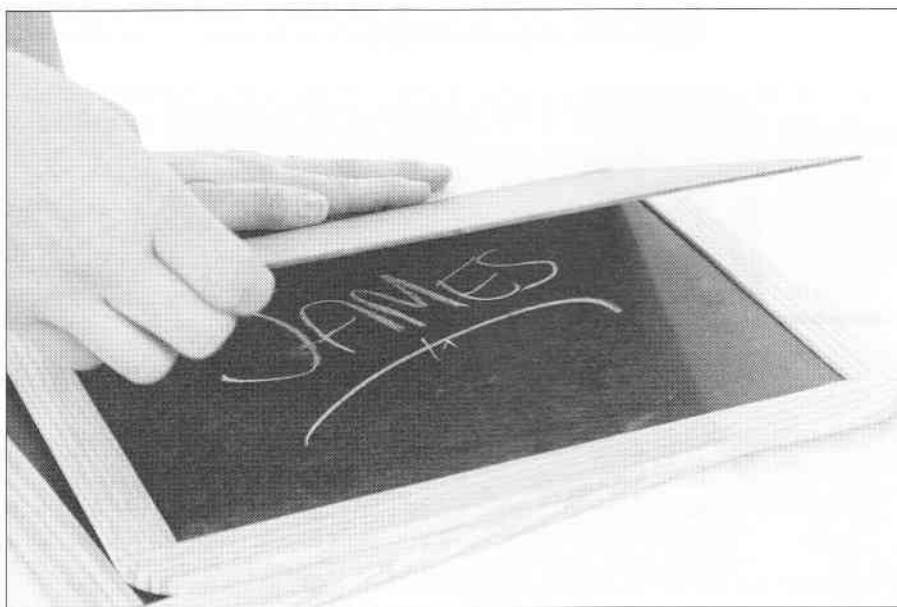


Figure 17-4:
Your
finished
spirit slate.

For this trick you also need:

- ✓ An extra-heavy-duty rubber band for binding your slates together.
- ✓ A one-way force deck.



In this special deck of cards, 51 out of the 52 cards are exactly the same suit and value; only the bottom card is different, which gives the impression, if anyone checks, that all the cards in the deck are different. You can buy these decks at magic shops, or make your own set. Make sure that your one-way force deck is rubber-banded together before beginning the trick.

✓ A stick of white chalk.



I normally place all these items in a super-sized sealable clear freezer bag, which keeps everything together and organised. Read the next section to find out how these items come into play.

Getting your slate trick props in place

Preparation is a vital part of your spirit slate trick, so make sure that you have everything you need in place before the start of your performance.

1. Make sure that your deck is in order:

- Ensure that all the cards are going the same way – all the backs facing up, and all the faces facing down. A one-way force deck is worthless if you don't organise it properly!

2. Place the one different card, also known as the 'face' of the deck, on the bottom of the deck and then put the deck inside the card box.

3. Wrap a rubber band around the box for later.



Put the deck in the box with the back of the deck facing the flap side, and the faces facing the opening, so that when you open the box, you can double-check that the indifferent face (a card that doesn't matter but in this case is different from the rest of the 51 cards that are the same) is looking you square in the eye before you display it. When you're performing, this safety measure prevents you from screwing things up if you happen to get side-tracked and forget to put the deck together properly. This way, if the indifferent card isn't there, you can do a quick look through and put it in the right place.

4. Prep the slates by cleaning them off.

5. Write on the flap the word *Ace* on one side, and on one side of one of the slates, write the word *Spades*.

6. Place the flap with the writing side against the writing on the slate to conceal it.

You can now show the slates on all sides, and they appear totally blank.

7. Put the second slate on top of the one holding the flap, place the deck on top of that and you're all set.

Delivering a slate-of-the-art performance

Now that you're fully prepped (as I describe in the preceding sections), get ready to use your slates to mystify your audience with spooky messages from the 'other side'.



Pay particular attention to the scripting in this section while you discover how to create this little miracle. Follow these steps:

- 1. Display the slates to the audience.**
- 2. Pick up the slates from the table and hold them together while introducing your audience to the phenomenon of the spirit slate.**

For example, say: 'For many years, mediums and psychics have used slates to communicate with those who have passed over to the other side. It's not uncommon during a séance for a friendly spirit to share a message with us in this way.'

- 3. Display both sides of each slate by taking the top slate in your right hand and the lower slate, with the flap up, in your left hand.**
- 4. Raise your right hand and turn the slate to display both sides.**
Do the same thing with the second slate in your left hand, keeping the flap held firmly in place with your left thumb. Say, 'Here are two slates used in the nineteenth century by schoolchildren. It's been said that they're photos of black cats walking down the street at night, put in nice wooden frames. But there's simply nothing to see.'
- 5. Reverse the slates so the flap falls into place.**
- 6. Bring your left hand down in front of you, still holding the flap in place with your thumb.**
- 7. Bring the slate in your right hand down and place it on top of the first one (edge to edge as opposed to face to face).**

As you go to place the slates on the table, reverse the position of the slates and the flap falls down into place exposing the writing inside. Place them back on the table.

- 8. Display the deck of cards to the audience.**
- 9. Grab the deck off the table and open it up.**
Be sure that the indifferent card is facing you as you open the box.
- 10. Remove the deck from the box and place it in your right hand, with the bottom of the deck facing up.**

11. Take the rubber band off the box and wrap it tightly around the deck a couple of times.

As you do so, nonchalantly display the bottom of the deck toward the audience. Now say, 'I've got a deck of cards here and I need a little help from someone.' Look around at people quickly, focus on someone close by and point saying, 'Hi there. Can you help me out?'

12. Toss out the deck to your volunteer.



Don't toss out the deck until you explain what you want the person to do. Say, 'Great. I'm going to toss this out to you. I'd like you to catch it. When you have it in your hands, keep it face down. I don't want anyone to think you're helping me; this is going to be like a double-blind experiment. Can you do that for me?' When the person agrees, gently toss the deck to him.



Make sure that the rubber band is tight around the deck. If it isn't, the deck easily falls apart when caught. I tend to bind the lower third up to the middle of the deck starting at one end, which leaves about half that can be looked at easily on the other end; it helps the volunteer orientate the deck when he has it in his hand.

Continue the trick by saying: 'Hold the deck in your left hand with the backs up and make sure they're squared. With your right thumb you're going to pick a place somewhere in the middle of the deck and lift enough cards so you can catch a glimpse of just one of them. Do it quickly now. Lift the deck, glimpse at a single card and remember it. When you've done that, toss the deck back up to me.'



I often pantomime the actions of holding the deck, lifting the cards, getting a peek and dropping the deck back down to my front. This demonstration helps to ensure that the volunteer handles the cards exactly in way you want – without realising that the deck is phoney!

When the person tosses the deck back to you, catch it and discard it to the side as if it doesn't matter. Pick up the two slates and follow these steps:

1. Display the spirit message.

With both slates in your hands, still stacked, gently lift the top slate with your right hand to see if the flap has fallen into place onto the bottom slate.

If it hasn't, adjust it with your left thumb. Say something along the lines of: 'I'd like you to concentrate on the card you chose. We're going to call the spirits to assist us.'



At this point I normally stand still and quiet for a moment to build up a bit of suspense; I close my eyes, tilt my head back for a second and then look forward again. 'I can tell they're here. Someone is present with us. Spirit, please help us . . . tell us what the card is!'

2. **Ask your volunteer to call out the identity of his chosen card so that everyone can hear.**

The volunteer, of course, calls out the ace of spades.

3. **Address the audience.**

'Ladies and gentleman, remember, our volunteer was given the deck and had a free choice. I didn't control the deck. He picked the ace of spades. And at no time did I do anything to the slates except to pick them up and hold them now here in front of you. In fact, I never once even held the chalk. Now, watch. . . .'

4. **Slowly pull the slates apart and display the blank backs to the audience.**
5. **Rotate your hands to expose the message on the inside.**

'It would appear that we have indeed received assistance from the spirits today!'

6. **Put the slates back together and take a bow.**

Handling a Haunted Deck

I bought this trick when I was 12 years old and I can't begin to tell you how many times I've performed it over the years. But just because the trick's easy enough for a 12-year-old to perform, doesn't mean that it isn't for adults too – even today I still perform this trick and get the same fantastic results. Believe it or not, sometimes the simplest tricks to perform are the most hard-hitting.

Fathoming out the haunted deck hoax

The Effect: The haunted deck is a classic. A deck of cards is taken out of the box and three volunteers are asked to each pick a card and then return it to the deck. The mentalist calls upon the spirits and the deck cuts itself in three different directions as if a ghost has reached down and pulled the chosen cards right out of the deck. The effect is truly spooky.

The Secret: The deck has a string running through its centre that's displaced by the cards as they're returned to the deck. When you pull the string, the pressure of the string straightening up pushes the picked cards out of the deck – cutting it in the process.

Making your own haunted deck

You can buy haunted decks in magic shops, but my first haunted deck broke because I used it so much, and so knowing how to make your own is useful. When I'd discovered the secret of how it worked, I created my own – and still have it. Aside from being a bit tattered and dirty from regular handling, the deck still works perfectly.

To make your own haunted deck you need:

- ✓ A standard deck of cards
- ✓ A good-sized sewing needle like the ones used for canvas sails
- ✓ A small- to medium-sized safety pin
- ✓ A roll of tape
- ✓ A tube of super glue
- ✓ A pair of scissors
- ✓ A spool of thin clear fishing line

Follow these instructions to create your own DIY haunted deck:

1. **Take the deck out of the box, remove the jokers and then shuffle it a couple of times to really mix up the cards.**
2. **Cut the deck in half so that you have roughly two 26-card piles. Leave one pile to the side for the moment.**
3. **Take one of the piles and thread the needle loaded with fishing line through the centre of the back of the top card – pulling it all the way through until it reaches the end.**
4. **Tape 2.5 centimetres (1 inch) of the line to the back of the card so that it doesn't accidentally pull through if pulled on.**

I put a small dab of super glue on the line at the hole to make sure that it sticks.
5. **Repeat this process for all the cards in that pile, making sure you pierce each card in *exactly the same spot*. Stack each subsequent card into place.**



If you don't thread the line in the same spot in the centre on the back of each subsequent card, the deck doesn't square up later. When you reach the last card, pull the rest of the line through; this card is now the bottom of the deck.

Read on to discover where the trusty safety pin comes in!

Getting your haunted deck into position

Having your deck in the right place at the right time is an integral part of this illusion and it needs to be done prior to your performance. Follow these steps:

1. **Hold the threaded packet of 26 cards in your right hand, with the fishing line running down in between your ring and middle finger towards the ground.**

The threaded packet of cards must always be on the bottom of the entire deck.

2. **Grasp the line with your left hand and extend your right arm (holding the cards) out at waist level, 15 to 23 centimetres (6 to 9 inches) to your front.**

The exact distance depends on the length of your arm and reach.

3. **Pull the line up to your belt line just about where your right front pocket is.**

Cut the line at this length and tie it to the small hole in the safety pin.

4. **Pin the line to your trousers.**

Pin the line end coming from the bottom of the bottom half of the packet just above the right pocket.

5. **Put the remaining half of the deck on the top of the threaded packet.**

The deck now has approximately 26 cards that are free and 26 cards with the line running all the way through them – from the top card, where it's held with tape, all the way down through the bottom 26 cards, and out through to the safety pin.

6. **Leave the line hanging out of the deck and put it back in the box with the bottom of the deck facing the opening towards you. That way, when you take the cards out later you can be sure of the orientation of the line and keep anyone from seeing it.**

Put the box in your pocket. You're ready to go.

Performing with pazazz

This trick is incredibly simple and easy-to-perform but scares the wits out of your audience. Of course, success depends on how you present the trick. If you do it as part of spirit theatre, for example, you can create a suitably spooky environment.



You can also present this trick as though you're using your psychic abilities to move the deck. Obviously, this creates an entirely different atmosphere and you need to script your patter accordingly.

Here's the basic routine I use for a close-up, intimate séance setting (jump to the later section 'Scaring Your Spectators Stiff' for creating a whole séance):



1. Present the deck by pulling the box out of your pocket.

Keep the deck facing you while removing it from the box to avoid anyone seeing the hole in the bottom card.

2. Address the audience.

Say, 'I have a deck of cards here. Not many people know this, but what you and I use as playing cards today have long been used by mediums to foretell the future and communicate with the dead; they even predate Tarot cards.' As you say this, randomly turn over cards from the top to show the faces; this move is called a *convincer* because it subtly suggests to the audience that you're holding a regular, run of the mill deck of cards.

3. Point to someone in the audience and ask that person to help you out.

4. Put the deck in your right hand and spread the top packet from right to left, leaving the lower half of the deck concealed under the top spread.



Present yourself as a novice when handling cards to avoid suspicion. The reason you do that is because most people naturally think someone who can manipulate or handle cards professionally has skills comparable to a magician's. If you appear unskilled, even when you're an expert, they lower their guard and won't assume you have any special abilities.

5. Ask your volunteer to point at any card he's drawn to.

To make sure he takes the one he pointed at, jog-out the card away from the rest of the deck so that he doesn't change his mind. This detail is only important because you want to make sure that nobody chooses from the lower half of the deck with the fishing line running through it. Repeat this process with two more volunteers.

6. Encourage your volunteers to show the card to their friends and other audience members, but ask that the cards not be shown to you.

After the cards have been displayed, ask your volunteers to return them to you.

7. Return the cards to the deck by reaching out and taking the three cards from your volunteers one at a time, making sure that the cards are face down.

This step is important!

8. Insert each card into the deck one at a time, into the lower portion of the deck – the one with the line running through it.
9. Put the first card somewhere in the middle of the lower portion of the deck and then put the second and third cards somewhere either side of the first one – to the left and right, respectively.

The positions in which you insert the cards determine the locations at which the deck cuts itself when you pull on the line that's pinned to your trousers.



10. Keep the deck lightly cradled in your right hand and push the cards in very gently – don't force them.

You can feel the tension of the line as the cards displace it. The line 'draws' upwards into the deck as you do this. You may have to adjust the location of your hand in terms of distance from your body, to compensate for this change in length. I suggest placing your hand somewhere near the upper third of the lower packet to give the impression that you're putting it somewhere in the middle of the deck.

Everyone is waiting for the show. So follow these steps:

1. Address the audience.

You can make up your own patter, but I say: 'Many spirits are still very connected to playing cards. This deck in particular belonged to my deceased great-uncle, a professional poker player. I didn't want to tell you that at first, because it's a bit bizarre. But he left these to me; they were his favourite deck of cards.'

'What you didn't know is that he's here with us right now. I realise it's hard to believe for some people, but it's true. And to prove it, I'm going to ask him to show himself.'

'All right then, I'm going to just hold the deck very lightly and very still in my hands. What's amazing is, if my great-uncle Charlie wasn't messing around and actually paid attention to the cards you picked, he should be able to cut them for us and show your cards. Here goes . . . Uncle Charlie, help me out here. Please cut the deck and identify the cards that were chosen.'



2. Gently move the arm holding the deck outward away from your body and in a slightly diagonal motion to the left.

Picture 360 degrees as being directly in front of you, then move your arm outward at about 345 degrees, and slightly upward at the same time. I bend at my waist a little so that my backside goes backward a little too; this move helps pull the line taut, which cuts the cards and kicks them out in the same order in which they were put into the deck.

We are gathered here. . .

The séance movement began on the night of 31 March 1848, in Haydensville, New York. Two young sisters, Kate and Margaret Fox, created mysterious ‘rapping’ sounds that were thought to be from a spirit. This form of ‘communication’ with the dead singlehandedly propelled séances into society and launched one of the most enduring hoaxes ever perpetrated. Séances attracted some of the greatest minds of the time, including Nobel laureates and respected scientists, as well as celebrities, politicians and royalty. As they gained acceptance, new ‘mediums’ suddenly discovered their ‘previously hidden’ spiritual abilities and began to conduct séances themselves – often for pay.

By the late 1850s, the séance scene boasted well over 700,000 converts in America alone – a truly staggering figure when you consider it was entirely founded upon lies. And then, in 1888, Margaret Fox publically stated: ‘I’m here tonight as one of the founders of Spiritualism to denounce it as an absolute falsehood from beginning to end, as the flimsiest of superstitions, the most wicked

blasphemy known to the world.’ You’d think that the movement would’ve come to a screeching halt – but it didn’t. In fact, duped supporters rallied around the movement and defended it.

Today, with well over 100 years of scientific research providing overwhelming evidence of consistent fraud and deception practised by people all over the world who claim to be mediums and psychics – the uninitiated continue to believe in droves. Everywhere you look television shows, books and events feature celebrity mediums claiming to be able to bring important messages to you from the other side.

I’ve been asked many times: ‘Why shouldn’t we believe? With everything we *think* we know about the world and the universe we live in – we still have no idea at all what happens to us when we die.’ In principle, I agree. I can’t tell you for certain what happens when people die or what’s on the other side – all I can do is show you how to conduct a convincing piece of spirit theatre. The rest is up to you to decide.



For maximum effect, reveal the cards as follows: cut the first card, pause but don’t turn it over, and then repeat for the remaining two cards. All three of the chosen cards will be sticking out of the deck now. Then, and only then, ask each of the volunteers to reach in and grab the cards; they always go for the one that should be their card because they’ll have seen that you placed the one they had either on the left, in the front or on the right. Be prepared for a phenomenal response!

Scaring Your Spectators Stiff

The word *séance* comes from the Old French *seoir*, which means ‘to sit’. In English, it has come to refer to a meeting of people who gather together to talk to the dead. The unique thing about a séance is that it’s presented

through a story. Features such as setting and props help to create atmosphere, which is an integral part of the audience's overall experience. In this section, I share the secrets of creating a séance with you and show you how to plan one and perform it with scream-worthy splendour.

Make sure that your audience knows that your séance is a bit of fun, and keep your tongue in your cheek throughout, while still maintaining the unsettling atmosphere you so carefully create. For more on the history of séances, see the nearby sidebar, 'We are gathered here. . . '.

Studying the secrets of the séance

The Effect: You conduct a séance and channel the spirit of famed medium Margery Crandon – a great friend of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, and enemy of the great magician, Harry Houdini.

The Secret: You force the card using a modified Svengali deck (check out the later section 'Preparing your Svengali deck' for more info).

Planning your séance to perfection

Setting the stage for your séance is as important as setting a stage in a play. If you're recreating a Victorian era séance, gather together some of the standard props that mentalists of the day used. Here's what you need:

- ✓ Your spirit slates (I show you how to make these in the earlier section 'Making your own set of slates')
- ✓ A little brass bell
- ✓ A couple of candles and some matches
- ✓ A Svengali deck (go to the later 'Preparing your Svengali deck' section to find out what one is and how to make your own)
- ✓ A gimmicked deck
- ✓ An old box
- ✓ A handkerchief
- ✓ A specially prepared letter, the text of which is on page 341 (made to look really old – read 'Aging your letter' later in this chapter to find out more)

Preparing your Svengali deck

A *Svengali deck* is a forcing (gimmicked) deck consisting of two sets of 26 cards; one set contains the force card, trimmed to be shorter than normal cards, and 26 indifferent cards. The sets are alternated in the deck so that, when handled properly, the deck seems perfectly normal. You can buy a Svengali deck in any magic or joke shop.



Nowadays, Svengali decks are pretty common, so I suggest some changes to prevent yours from being detected by someone familiar with the principle.

1. Age the deck.

Age the deck using coffee, tea, brown/green food colouring or by scuffing the cards on the ground. You can age things in countless ways: for more info, carry out a quick search online.

2. Roughen and smooth the cards.

Roughen up the faces of the force cards and the backs of the other cards. Doing so allows you to spread the cards during the séance because they will stick together in two-card units that appear to be single cards, which you can't do with a standard Svengali deck (see Chapter 5 for more on the rough and smooth card principle).

Aging your letter

Use a linen paper for this job. You can make your own letter. I design mine to look as though it's been typed.



Don't print the letter on an inkjet, because the ink runs when you age it! To age it, simply use the same method for the cards above.

Buy a matching envelope and age it too. If you really want to make things look convincing, buy a traditional fountain pen and ink in a bottle and hand-write the letter and the envelope yourself.

Adding your finishing touches

Wrap the deck in a handkerchief and put it in the box. Place the aged letter in an aged envelope, and put it in the box as well.



Place some dried flowers in the box; they create an interesting look and provide an evocative scent that contributes to the atmosphere of your presentation. You want to evoke images, thoughts and feelings in your spectators during the presentation. It's all theatre.

Serving up a startling séance

In this section, I talk you through a séance routine that has your sitters gripped from the moment they arrive. I describe how to set the pace of your séance, maintain dramatic impact throughout and create a ‘wow’ with your finale.

Setting the scene

Sit everyone around a table, dim the lights and light the candles – your séance is about to begin:

1. Start things off with a little introduction.

Say, ‘I’m sure many, if not all of you, have heard of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – the author of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Although Doyle was a very rational thinker, someone who was obviously a master of deductive reasoning, he was also a man who believed in the spirit world, and specifically in ghosts and even fairies. He was great friends with and an ardent supporter of a medium named Margery Crandon.’

‘Doyle and his wife were friends for many years with my favourite magician, Harry Houdini. But they became bitter rivals because Houdini would lambast Doyle for his credulity in accepting the outrageous claims of mediums, who Houdini believed were fakes – especially Margery.’

‘I have two things in this box I want to share with you – one belonged to Margery, and the other to Houdini. They’re incredibly rare and very valuable to me, which is why I keep them protected in here.’

2. Remove the letter from the box.

‘This letter was from J. Malcolm Bird, associate editor of the respected, popular science magazine, *Scientific American* – dated 18 June 1924. I’ve had it in my collection for some time, along with a very special deck of cards.’

‘Not many people remember the medium Margery, but she was one of the few people Houdini had difficulty catching out as a fraud. At the time, *Scientific American* had convened a committee to investigate her, and this letter was sent to Houdini asking him for help.’

3. Place the letter on the table and pull out the deck.

‘This deck accompanied the letter and was in Houdini’s possession until he died, and then the cards disappeared. Bess, Houdini’s wife, assumed they’d been misplaced. It wasn’t until 1963 that they resurfaced at the house contents sale of a magician who’d known Houdini. My grandfather, who was also a magician, purchased them as memorabilia without understanding their importance. When he died, I inherited them. But I didn’t understand their power either – until recently. And shortly, you’ll understand it too.’



4. Put the deck on the table, pick up the letter again, and read the first couple of paragraphs.

Read the letter slowly so your sitters are able to listen carefully and digest the information you're giving them. Doing so is vital to their following and understanding your séance.

'It says,' clearing your throat, 'My Dearest Mr Houdini. As you will observe when you get your *July Scientific American*, we are engaged in the investigation of another case of mediumship. Our original idea was not to bother you with it unless, and until, it got to a stage where there seemed serious prospects that it was either genuine, or a type of fraud which our other Committeemen could not deal with. We are concerned about the enclosed deck of cards which has been obtained from the medium Margery, and would like you to look at them. It seems, and we pray you keep this private, that the deck possesses some kind of supernatural authority by which one can contact the deceased.'

Pause, take a deep breath and make eye contact with your sitters. Doing so is just part of the act and helps create the idea that something is happening, even though it isn't.

Say, 'I won't read the rest, but suffice it to say that Houdini was concerned enough to never mention this letter to anyone except his adoring wife Bess – and he kept the deck for two years before he passed on. I submit to you that, if it were a simple deck of cards, there's no logical reason why Houdini – who himself was billed as the "King of Cards" – would need to hold on to it. And yet, he did so. Perhaps they really do have some kind of power; maybe they really can unlock the door and allow us to talk to the dead. Maybe that's crazy, but I say we find out right now.'

Getting your audience involved

Draw your audience into your séance by following these steps:

1. Select a bell-ringer.

'I propose that one of you acts as a medium to channel the spirit of Margery using the deck of cards. There's nothing to be afraid of – everyone's doing it!' That statement tends to get a chuckle.

Continue, 'As the owner of the deck, I'll act as a marshal to protect us from harm. But which one of you will act as the medium and attempt to channel Margery? Yes, I'm sensing you would do nicely.' I tend to pick someone who seems interested in what I'm doing. 'Here, I'd like you to take this bell.' Reach into the box and remove the small brass bell and place it in front of your new assistant.

2. Instruct your bell-ringer.

Say, 'In a moment, you're going to ring this bell, well not you exactly. You won't just ring it whenever *you* want, but when you feel any spiritual sensation in your body that seems to compel you. Don't try to control the bell yourself – we're going to ask Margery to do it for you; she'll reach through you, into your arm and cause it to ring the bell.'

3. Display the deck to your sitters.

Pick up the deck of cards again, and say: 'Other than the fact that they're old, this is a pretty standard deck of cards; not much has changed in nearly 100 years.'

4. Fan the faces slowly in front of everyone so they can see that the cards are different and mixed up.

You're able to fan the deck because the cards are rough and smooth, as explained in 'Preparing your Svengali deck' earlier in this chapter.

Be sure to apply the right amount of pressure so that the duplicate cards aren't accidentally shown to anyone. I strongly encourage you to practise fanning the cards in this way until you feel confident about doing so long before you ever consider performing with the deck in front of an audience.



5. Square the deck in your hand and look at the person on your left.

Bring all the cards together so they are even and stacked, then say, 'As I run my finger down the side of the deck, tell me to stop whenever you feel compelled to do so.' This approach is a pretty standard way to handle a Svengali deck, but you can also riffle it or dribble it (as I describe in Chapters 5) onto the table.

6. Cut the deck where instructed.

When the person identifies where he wants you to stop your finger on the deck, you:

- Cut the cards at that point.
- Instruct your volunteer to take the top card and show it to everyone else.



Because that person takes the top card of your Svengali deck, you know that the new top card is an indifferent one. (For a reminder on how the Svengali deck works, skip to the earlier section 'Preparing your Svengali deck'.)

7. Separate the deck into two piles.

Turning to the bell-ringer, say, 'This is where things get strange. Tonight, we concern ourselves with two different worlds – that of the living, and that of the dead. The latter is the domain of spirits and it's also where Margery resides; she has since 1948.'



Split the deck into two by dealing one card at a time into two different piles.

When separating the deck into two different piles, the top card (indifferent) goes to the right and then the next card (the force card) goes to the left. Repeat this process until you have two complete piles.

Say, 'The two piles represent the two different worlds. As I deal the cards, I want you to visualise what the afterlife looks like to you.' As you start to slowly deal, say, 'Perhaps you may think of a beautiful beach or rolling green pastures. Maybe in your mind's eye, you envision being surrounded by loved ones now past. Whatever you choose, make sure it's a pleasant and joyful thought.'

Wrapping up with a frightening finale

Get ready to bring the house down with a bloodcurdling finale. Follow these steps:

1. **Eliminate one of the piles of cards.**
2. **Turning to your bell-holding volunteer, continue with your instructions.**

'Do me a favour; hold the bell out over both piles and relax; I want you to be calm and surrender yourself to Margery's influence for just a moment. You have nothing to be afraid of; just take a deep breath, close your eyes and trust her to work through you. I'm not sure what you'll experience – a tingling, energy flowing down your arm, perhaps, who knows. But you'll know when you feel it. When it feels right to you, ring the bell and place it on whichever pile you feel drawn to. Go ahead now.' The sitter focuses and concentrates and then, pretty soon, he does as you ask.



If your sitter doesn't react straight away, gently encourage him by repeating what you just said. Even the most stubborn or sceptical of sitters eventually give up and do what you ask.

Whatever pile he puts the bell on say, 'Thank you.' Pick up the indifferent pile and spread the cards on the table, face up. Ask the sitter who picked the card if he sees his card among the pile – he won't.

3. **Discard that pile and say, 'Okay, then we must use this pile.' Then reach over and pick up the force pile, keeping it face down.**
4. **Ask the spirits to identify the chosen card.**
5. **Instruct your bell-ringer to pick up the bell again.**
6. **Deal the force pile of cards slowly, face down, so nobody can see them.**

Say, 'We're going to ask Margery to ring the bell the moment the card is about to hit the table. When you feel her ring the bell through you, ring it and I'll stop on that card. Here we go.'

- 7. Begin dealing the cards face down one at a time, nice and slowly. When your volunteer rings the bell, stop.**

Say, 'Are you sure this is where she has told you to stop? Do you need to change your mind? If this is where you feel it is, we'll stop here.' Giving your sitter the freedom of choice at this point helps reinforce that nothing is set up, when of course everything is set up.

- 8. Reveal the chosen card.**

- 9. Place the selected card face down on the table by itself and ask your volunteer to put the bell on top.**

Doing so keeps it safe from being turned over by someone else.

- 10. Square the force cards pile and place it on top of the face down indifferent pile. Then pick up the whole deck.**

- 11. Spread the lower deck of 26 indifferent cards.**

Say, 'We've now gone through the entire deck, and only one card was chosen . . . and it's sitting there safely under the bell.'

- 12. Square the deck back up and move it out of reach.**

All attention is now on the card under the bell – right where you want it. That little spreading of the cards helps to convince the audience that everything's on the up-and-up.

- 13. Address your audience for the last time.**

Looking at everyone, sit back and say, 'Was that your choice, or Margery's? Were you influenced by a spirit on the other side? Did the veil get pulled back, if only for a moment?'

- 14. Ask your volunteer to name his card out loud for the first time.**

- 15. Ask him to turn the card over.**

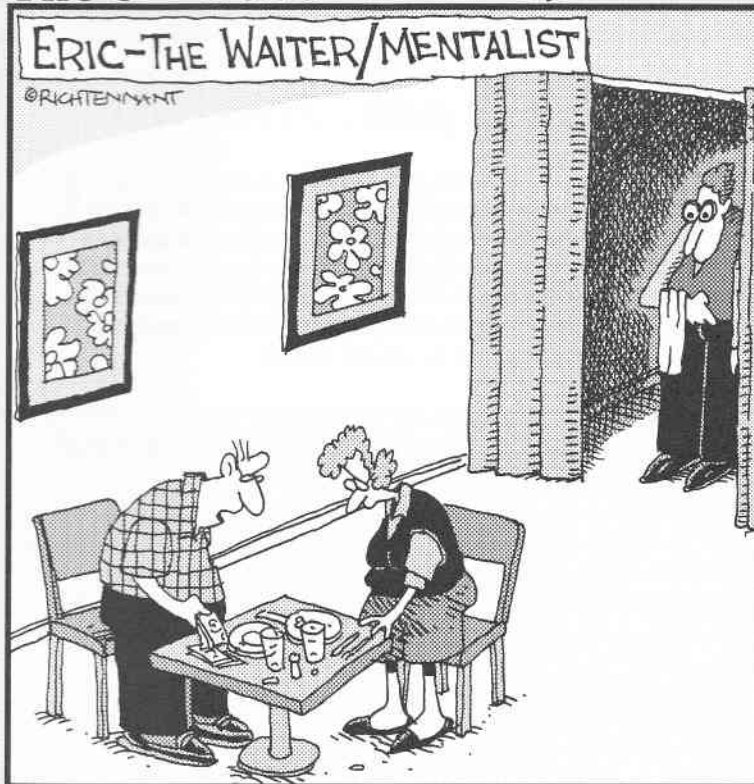
It's the chosen card. Shock horror!

Part V

The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I know 20 percent is a good tip, but 60 percent just popped into my mind."

***W** In this part . . .*

ant to understand mentalism on a deeper level? Then it's worth taking the time to get to know the performers who came before us because they set the standards, developed the techniques and created the concepts that allow us to do what we do today. This part introduces you to these giants, the techniques they created and to other books that can help you be all you can be.

Chapter 18

Ten Mentalists Who Shook the World

In This Chapter

- ✦ Uncovering the pioneers of mentalism
- ✦ Considering some inspiring mentalists
- ✦ Pin-pointing their most mind-boggling tricks

Occasionally, someone comes along in a given art that utterly changes the face of it. Getting to know these people and their contributions can amaze and inspire you. In this chapter, you find out about ten extraordinary mentalists, the legacies they left behind and what made each one of them great: in other words, the myths, the magic . . . and *erm*, the mentalism!

Tony Andruzzi (1925–1991)

Born in Cheyenne, Wyoming, Antonio C. Andruzzi was a mentalist who specialised in the field of *Bizarre Magic*. This involves performers seeking to create illusions that seemingly re-enact occult *magick* – tricks theatrically designed to make audiences wonder if what they're seeing is the real thing. I still use his 'pulse stop' routine today.

For a decade Andruzzi, who legally changed his name to Thomas S. Palmer, edited the magazine the *New Invocation*, dedicated to the field of mentalism. He also wrote articles in the *Sphinx*, *Genii*, *Tops*, *Magick* and *Invocation*. He was featured in a video entitled *Bizarre* teaching a number of his own inventions.

Theodore Annemann (1907–1942)

All serious mentalists know the name Theodore ‘Theo’ Annemann. Born in New York as Theodore John Squires, Annemann was introduced to magic at a young age and quickly became obsessed with the art. According to his mother, his obsession so negatively impacted his schooling that she burned his magic materials hoping to discourage him. He continued without his mother’s permission and by the age of 17 was publishing tricks in famous trade magazines within the magician community.

Today, seeing conjurors perform knuckle-busting skills isn’t unusual – especially among mechanics and extreme card manipulators (XCM artists) – but Theo’s ideas were often far more important than the tricks themselves. As a result, much of what he developed and shared in his short 35 years is still used to this day. During his lifetime he not only published *The Jinx*, a classic resource for mentalists wanting to advance their knowledge and skill in mentalism, but also ten other books; another seven were attributed to him posthumously.

One of the best books about Annemann is *The Life and Times of a Legend: Annemann* by Max Abrams, but it can be difficult to find. I got my copy from a magic shop, and that’s where I suggest you start looking.

Annemann mysteriously committed suicide on 12 January 1942, just before he was about to perform the famous Bullet Catch for the first time indoors.

Tony Corinda (1931–2010)

English magician Thomas William Simpson focused heavily on mentalism both as a performer, and as a purveyor of magical tricks at The Magic Shop, which he ran in Tottenham Court Road in London. He wrote a series of pamphlets between 1958 and 1960 under the moniker Tony Corinda – *Thirteen Steps to Mentalism* – which became some of the most respected and foundational works in the art of mentalism. See Chapter 19 for more on these.

Published as a complete book in 1964 by D. Robbins and Co., this series can still be found for sale at most magic shops around the world. I got the chance to communicate with Corinda briefly in the hope of getting to know him better and to produce a DVD series based on his work. Sadly, he died peacefully at a retirement home in Norfolk, England, on 1 July 2010, before we arranged to meet. One thing is for certain – his impact in the world of mentalism is sure to live long into the future.

Joseph Dunninger (1892–1975)

Many people consider the 'Amazing Dunninger' to be one of the most capable mentalists who ever lived. He was certainly one of the most famous, having pioneered magic performances on radio and television and performed personally for the likes of President Theodore Roosevelt and inventor Thomas Edison.

Dunninger was also well known for offering \$10,000 to anyone able to prove that he used stooges to help him with his act, as well as another offer through the magazine *Scientific American* to any so-called medium or psychic who could produce any psychic or supernatural phenomena that he was unable to produce through natural means and trickery – nobody ever claimed.

Dunninger's books and manuscripts include:

- ✓ *Dunninger's Tricks De Luxe* (1918)
- ✓ *Dunninger's Master Methods of Hypnotism* (1923)
- ✓ *Popular Magic* (1926)
- ✓ *Universal Second Sight Mysteries* (1927)
- ✓ *Inside the Medium's Cabinet* (1935)
- ✓ *How to Make a Ghost Walk* (1936)
- ✓ *What's On Your Mind* (1944)
- ✓ *100 Houdini Tricks You Can Do* (1954)
- ✓ *The Art of Thought Reading* (1956)
- ✓ *Dunninger's Book of Magic* (1979)

Glen Falkenstein (1932–2010)

Falkenstein became attracted to the art of magic, like most enthusiasts, at a pretty young age. His father owned the High Hat nightclub in Chicago and frequently had magicians perform there; Falkenstein always had a front row seat, so to speak. When he turned pro himself years later, he was able to secure appearances on a number of popular television shows and expose his brand of mentalism to millions of viewers.

Falkenstein later performed alongside his wife, Frances Willard. The routines they performed together have been compared to those of the Zancigs (described in Chapter 14) and Piddingtons, two of the most successful acts

showcasing mentalism techniques during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Falkensteins shared a number of their trick, such as their two-way mind-reading act, and their unique scripting in an instructional DVD series produced in 1999 by L&L Productions in California. If you want to be a good performer, learning from people who were successful and did what you want to do is always worthwhile.

Uri Geller (1946–)

Born in Tel Aviv, Israel, Geller has made a living performing as a psychic and rose to prominence by bending spoons, moving objects and describing hidden drawings supposedly with the power of his mind. Although the scientific community tested Geller numerous times in an effort to validate his claims, nothing concrete has ever emerged from the investigations.

For decades, Geller stated that the feats he performs are the result of powers given to him by extra-terrestrials. Yet, in his own autobiography, he states that he uses magic tricks to prolong performances. In 1973, he appeared on *The Tonight Show*, hosted by Johnny Carson, but was unable to bend a single piece of cutlery. Geller didn't know that Carson had been an amateur magician his entire life and had consulted other magicians on how to thwart any use of conjuring techniques during that episode. Geller failed miserably on national television as a result.

In 1996, Noel Edmonds used hidden cameras that caught Geller firmly grasping a spoon with both hands to bend it. On another show, titled *The Successor*, Geller is seen using a magnet to make a compass move – hardly displays of true psychic ability.

In my opinion, Geller is one of the most notable magicians in modern history simply because he has been able to convince the world – for decades – that he possesses powers the average person doesn't, by using some of the most basic tricks ever devised in the conjuring arts. Something's to be said for his ability to maintain such a monumental hoax for so long.

David Hoy (1930–1981)

Hoy grew up in a lower-middle class Christian home in the US Midwest and become an ordained minister. As an inventor and producer of book tests (see Chapter 9) – used by performers all over the world – mentalists today

have a significant amount of respect for the bold concepts and ideas that Hoy shared about magic.

Originally, Hoy used magic and mentalism to illustrate stories in the Bible, but for reasons he alone knows, he abandoned Christianity and began to bill himself as having actual psychic abilities. Nevertheless, Hoy had some incredibly fantastic ideas that justify his addition to this list. One of his best tricks, and indeed example of his thinking, was the *Tossed Out Deck* – a version of which can be found in Chapter 9 of this book.

Burling Hull (1889–1982)

Whether he went by the name Cliff Westfield, Gilbert Galt, Sylvester Walters, Volta, Volta the Great, the White Wizard, Gid Dayn or Burling Hull, Burlingame Gilbert Gault Hull will be forever known as ‘Hurling Bull’ because of his feud with mentalist Robert A. Nelson. Hull publically accused Nelson of selling magic tricks to dubious characters who would presumably go on to use what they learned for ‘thievery of the public’ and other immoral purposes. In particular, Hull published a series of scathing letters he entitled *The G-d D-n Truth About Magic*, which outlined his opinion on these issues.

I’ve long admired Hull for the stance he took against those who use magic for immoral and illegal purposes but also for the fact that he was such a shrewd businessman, capable marketer, inventor and prolific author. His three-volume *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Mentalism* is the largest collection of mentalism tricks ever produced. He’s also the inventor of the Svengali Deck, for which he received a US patent in 1909; millions have been produced and sold under a variety of names ever since. For tips on how to perform tricks using the Svengali Deck, go to Chapter 17.

Al Koran (1914–1972)

Al Koran was the stage name of Edward Doe, a hairdresser turned professional magician who emigrated to America from the UK in 1969. During his lifetime, he created and shared scores of innovative tricks with the magic world, including the Koran Medallion, Ring Flite and the Koran Deck.

Two books about Koran include *Al Koran’s Legacy* by Hugh Miller (1973) and *The Magic of Al Koran* (1984) by Martin Breese – both are worth a read, if you can find them. Try your local bookshop, the Internet or magic conventions, such as the one in Blackpool, at which magicians gather together every year.

Al Mann (1924–1999)

A ship's captain with the merchant marines, Gilbert S. Aleman spent 40 years as a mariner – giving him plenty of time, while at sea, to contemplate the art of mentalism. Born in 1924, Mann was friends with magicians Richard Himber (inventor of the Himber Wallet and Himber Ring) and Joseph Dunninger, mentioned earlier in this chapter. In fact, Mann was at Dunninger's bedside when he passed away. During his lifetime Mann invented some 30 tricks and authored scores of publications on magic and mentalism, including *The Photon Shield*, *The Sibylline Messages* and *Acidus*.

Chapter 19

Ten Books to Take You Deeper into the Art of Mentalism

In This Chapter

- ▼ Delving into the minds of extraordinary mentalists
- ▼ Discovering more info to develop your own tricks and illusions
- ▼ Appreciating the powers of influence

If you dream of becoming a complete master of mentalism, now's your chance. This chapter recommends the best books you can read to help convince others of your superhuman abilities!

How Not to Test a Psychic

In 1970, the *Guinness Book of World Records* proclaimed Pavel Stepanek the 'best clairvoyant ever tested'. In *How Not to Test a Psychic*, author Martin Gardner explains why Stepanek was able to get away with defrauding the world. Stepanek was a fraud; a man who pretended to have psychic abilities, but in reality, he was an ordinary man with a honed ability to fool people. And it was that honed ability that made him world-renowned. Gardner's book illustrates how Stepanek was able to be so successful in his deceptions, and it's worth reading because it may help you understand how to perform tricks with others.

How We Know What Isn't So

To gain a better understanding of why people believe in ESP, aliens and faith healing, read *How We Know What Isn't So*. Professor Thomas Gilovich looks at how mentalism straddles the world of rational thought and bizarre beliefs

and explains why people tell themselves lies and affirm patterns that don't exist to support their ideas about things.

Gilovich also discusses why people deceive themselves even when faced with overwhelming facts disproving their beliefs.

Influence – Science and Practice

Professor Robert B. Cialdini is one of the pre-eminent researchers on the topic of influence, something about which every mentalist requires a good understanding. This bestseller focuses on psychological principles, such as reciprocity, consistency, social proof, liking, authority and scarcity, which direct human behaviour every day – even yours. I've read this book multiple times and suggest you do the same. As a mentalist, the more you understand about human behaviour and the way people think, the easier it is for you to tap into that understanding to create mind-blowing magic.

Martin Gardner Presents

This book is one of my favourites – and one of the most collectable and hard to find, too. It's a colossal compendium of magic tricks in a variety of categories from impromptu to mathematics, by a man I loved and respected as a dear friend and mentor.



Start by asking at your local magic shop to see if they have a copy. If you can't find it there, check online. You can also try magic conferences. If you can find one, get it.

Practical Mental Magic

Edited in 1944, after Theodore Annemann's death, this book offers 12 chapters and 300 pages worth of 200 different mentalism routines involving money, cards, billets, book tests and much more. Inside the pages you'll find all kinds of useful advice on techniques, patter, staging and presentation that may help you become a better mentalist. If you don't know Annemann, you need to (go to Chapter 18). His contributions to the art are legendary.

Psychology of a Psychic

University lecturers David Marks and Richard Kammann wrote this book, which critiques a number of notable parapsychology studies (an academic area focused on researching and testing claims of the paranormal, such as ESP), including those of Uri Geller. Marks states, 'As far as I'm aware, from my observation, Geller has no psychic ability whatsoever. However, he's a very clever, well-practiced magician.'

Inside the pages, the authors discuss – in detail – a multitude of tests conducted with a variety of 'psychics' and how those tests panned out. The book really opens the door to understanding how tests are conducted and the techniques and mind-set of those who set out to fool the testers. I've read it several times, and firmly believe you can benefit from it, too.

Stewart James – The First 50 Years

Published in 1989, this book outlines some of the thinking of Stewart James, an exceptional magician and brilliant inventor. Although the book isn't strictly about mentalism, it contains some fascinating magic ideas, concepts, techniques and scripts to help you think outside the box and develop new ways of seeing magic.



One of the keys to becoming a well-rounded performer is learning different ways to approach magic. This book has a wealth of information and is worth picking up.

The Trick Brain

The best magicians and mentalists think – they use their heads – and they do so in ways that other people don't. They use tricks in ways that allow them to truly perform miracles, even if they're fake ones.

One of the best ways to advance yourself as a mentalist is to discover how to create and invent your own tricks – and that's where *The Trick Brain* comes in. Written by Dariel Fitzkee, the book is a classic in the world of magic that I simply can't recommend highly enough.

Thirteen Steps to Mentalism

Written by Tony Corinda (flip to Chapter 18 for more), *Thirteen Steps to Mentalism* is one of the most respected foundational books on mentalism ever written. Inside, some of the most guarded secrets of mentalism are revealed – from how to use Swami Gimmicks (see Chapter 6) and billets (see Chapter 7) to how to read whilst wearing a blindfold and how to predict a newspaper headline days, weeks, months or even years in advance! Every mentalist on the planet has heard of this book – or they're simply not a mentalist.

Why People Believe Weird Things

Having spent years in the world of magic and mentalism, I have difficulty not being sceptical of people who make weird claims, such as being abducted by aliens, that they can communicate telepathically with pets or talk to the dead, but understanding why audiences believe these things in the first place is even harder for me. In this book, Michael Shermer, the founder of *Skeptic* magazine, reveals errors in people's thinking that subsequently lead to errors in their beliefs. You can benefit from this book because it helps you to think more critically while learning how you can use these thought processes in your performances.



As a mentalist, this approach helps you to better understand the people you perform for, consequently enhancing the quality of your tricks or illusions.

Chapter 20

Ten (or so) Techniques to Make You Seem a Minor Deity

In This Chapter

- ✦ Discovering secret techniques that put you a head above the rest
- ✦ Ensuring your trick goes your way
- ✦ Uncovering the simplest tricks with the most startling outcomes

This chapter gives you the all-time top mentalism techniques. Use them wisely to create the illusion that you have abilities other people only dream of.

Telling a Bold-Faced Lie

David Hoy (whom I describe in Chapter 18) was known for his fearlessly bold performance techniques. For example, he'd riffle the pages of a book while it was facing someone in the audience and ask them to say 'stop'. When the person did, he'd swing the book around, pretend to look at the page number, yell out the number he needed to continue his trick and slam the book closed.



Nothing beats a confidently told, bold-faced lie to help convince people of what you want them to believe during a performance, and it's really easy to do (see the 'Performing a bold book test' in Chapter 9).

Using Dual Reality

Often, different people recall different memories and find different meanings even when they've taken part in the same event or conversation. This concept of *dual reality* means that different people involved in a performance,

such as people helping you and the audience watching the show, believe different things about what they see and hear. When properly scripted, the end result is that everyone thinks that they're witnessing the same trick, when in fact they may not be.



You can use this tendency to your advantage when performing, as long as you understand the language people use and the actions they take in certain situations.

Getting What You Want Every Time: Equivoque

Also known as the 'magician's choice', the word *equivoque* is derived from Latin and means 'ambiguous' or 'to have a double meaning'.

I describe the technique in more detail in Chapter 5, but basically it works as follows. If I have two decks of cards on a table and I ask you to point to one of them, I use whichever deck you pick to arrive ultimately at the one I want to use for my trick. If I want the deck on the left and you point at it, perfect. If, on the other hand, you pick the one on the right, I simply say, 'Great, I'll eliminate that one. Thanks.' Get it?



No matter what you want as the mentalist, you get it with the magician's choice – and no one ever suspects a thing.

Forcing Things onto People

You can force something onto an audience member in hundreds, if not thousands, of ways: cards, books, numbers, objects, words – the list is almost endless. For example, you can 'force' a card using a variety of techniques, such as the criss-cross force or the classic force (both of which I explain in Chapter 5), whereby you know in advance what card a volunteer will pick.



You can buy or make plenty of gimmicks to help you force something onto a volunteer. I've created several fake books that look completely innocent but are in fact designed to force a volunteer to choose a certain page number that then directs her to a page already known to me in another book. I get her, through a series of scripted directions, to 'randomly' choose a page in book A (my gimmicked book). Book A is then discarded and she's directed to open book B at the page number she chose in book A. All along, I know that page

number and have already read the relevant line in book B, so what she subsequently reads is known to me and I can pretend to read her mind. The best thing about this trick is that book A is no longer in play and book B is completely normal, so there's no gimmick to be found. See Chapter 9 for directions on how to perform book tricks.

Marking Codes

Marking codes are nothing more than you taking an object – anything from a deck of cards to a book – and marking that object with a secret code that your audience doesn't know exists. During the course of your trick this mark helps you identify something particular depending on the routine you're performing, such as the value of a hidden card, a word on an opposite page or where something is located. You're limited only by your imagination.

Being a Step in Front of the Audience: The One-Ahead Principle

This concept is incredibly simple and is based on the idea of using already known information to stay one step ahead of the audience in obtaining other information you didn't previously have access to. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, but the commonist is to pretend to read a piece of information (note B) and miscall it as being another piece of information (note A) to the audience. They think you're reading one thing, when in reality you're reading another that you hadn't seen before.

During a performance, I write down a fact about my grandmother that's going to be sent by a 'spirit guide' to someone helping me on stage. I write down the fact, such as her age, and put the piece of paper in a glass before I ask my helper what she thinks is being sent to her from the Great Beyond. In fact, I wrote down another fact that I'm going to force on her later using psychological subtleties.

When I later allow the helper to read the slips of paper I wrote down ahead of time, they reveal that all the facts are correct or very close. All I've done is write something else I knew on that first slip, and then when she gave me the answer for the first question, I wrote that down on the second slip. You can do this with pretty much as many slips as you like, so long as you know one fact beforehand. When mixed up, nobody can tell what order the slips were written down in and everything seems legitimate.

Mentalists who perform question and answer acts, often considered the Holy Grail of mentalism tricks, often use this one-ahead routine. During such a performance, you collect a series of envelopes from people who've written down secret questions for you and sealed them in envelopes so you can't read them.



One of the envelopes, however, contains a known question placed by a stooge (a technique I cover in the later section 'Getting by With a Little Help From Your Friends: Stooges and Confederates'). You pretend to read the answer to the stooge's question, which you get correct (of course!). When you open up the stooge's envelope, it is in fact another person's envelope, which you read in preparation for the next envelope. And nobody's the wiser.

Taking a Peek

A peek is nothing more than, well you guessed it, peeking at something that you're not supposed to be able to see. If a 'psychic' asks you to write something down, you can nearly always assume that she peeks at what you write – even if you didn't see her do it.

You can peek at notes, folded business cards and the like in hundreds of different ways. Among my favourites methods are the 'centre tear' and the 'acidus test', which I discuss in Chapter 7. You can also peek at a playing card during a shuffle, the contents of the page of a book when performing a classic 'book test' trick (see Chapter 9) and down your nose to see an object when you're wearing a blindfold. Peeking may be simple, but mastering the technique certainly helps you put on a peak performance (groan!).

Getting By With a Little Help from Your Friends: Stooges and Confederates

A *stooge* (or *confederate*) is a person who helps you with the trick you want to perform. The person can be an assistant who helps out regularly, a friend who gets involved when you perform or even someone from the audience who becomes an 'instant stooge' at the right moment during a performance.

Many top performers in history have used stooges to help make their acts evermore seemingly impossible. Other magicians and mentalists, however, are afraid to use them and some believe that doing so isn't 'fair' or 'right'. But

mentalists are fakers in every sense of the word, and so I see no problem with receiving a little assistance to help entertain an audience.

More often than not, the stooge involved in an act always assumes that she's the only stooge involved. In fact, you can use multiple stooges in various parts of an act, and each will assume they're the only one. This allows you to even fool the stooges so they don't fully understand how a routine or trick works from start to finish. I believe that having 99 stooges helping out in an audience of 100 to trick one person is worthwhile, if the result is all-round entertainment. Check out Chapter 14 for more on using stooges.

Switching Things with the Assumption Swindle

In 2006, a good friend of mine and respected mentalist, Jack Kent Tillar (who is also a world-renowned composer who won an Oscar for his film and television scores), wrote a fantastic book entitled *The Assumption Swindle*, which contains some real marvels of mentalism, including the title trick itself.

The Assumption Swindle trick involves discreetly switching a set of cards in the middle of a performance – to ensure your desired outcome. As well as playing cards, you can also incorporate this simple trick into a number of other scenarios to entertain your audience. Switching items is a great way to ensure that things go your way.

Appendix

Video Clips



One of the best ways to learn mentalism is by watching others perform it. In this respect, the DVD is designed to introduce you to a handful of the effects taught throughout *Mind Magic & Mentalism For Dummies*, rather than teaching you step-by-step how to perform them. I demonstrate simple and direct examples of how you can perform these effects, and what the audience will see when you do.

Here is a list of the effects on the accompanying DVD-ROM and where you can find them in the book:

Lie Detection	Chapter 5
Living And Dead Test	Chapter 6
Acidus Test	Chapter 7
PK Glass	Chapter 8
Wayward Compass	Chapter 8
Table Top Pen	Chapter 8
Book Tests	Chapter 9
Russian Roulette (The Safe Version)	Chapter 11
The Gimmicked Deck	Chapter 11
Where'd They Hide It?	Chapter 14
Which Hand Is It In?	Chapter 14
Needle Through The Arm	Chapter 15
Voodoo Ashes	Chapter 17
Haunted Deck	Chapter 17



Always practise every effect you want to perform until you can fool yourself when watching in a mirror.

To view the videos, insert the DVD-ROM into your computer. You can also download the video clips from <http://booksupport.wiley.com>.

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